

Prelatique Preachers

NONE OF CHRIST'S TEACHERS:

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A Disswative unto the People of God from attending the Ministry (so called) of those, who preach by vertue of an (*Apocryphal*) Ordination, received from an Order of men, commonly stiled

L O R D B I S H O P S.

Wherein Arguments are tendered to their serious considerations, by way of Motive against that practice: the unlawfulness thereof demonstrated: and the Pretences briefly answered, which commonly are, or lightly can be pleaded, in justification of it.

And what agreement hath the Temple of God with Idols? for ye are the Temple of the living God: — Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you; and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my Sons and Daughters, saith the Lord Almighty, 2 Cor. 6. 16, 17, 18.

For such are false Apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the Apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an Angel of Light: Therefore it is no great thing if his Ministers also be transformed as the Ministers of Righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works, 2 Cor. 11. 13, 14, 15. — From such turn away, 2 Tim. 3. 5.

Then Jesus said unto them, Take heed and beware of the Leaven of the Pharisees, and of the Sadducees, [that is, of their Doctrine] Matth. 16. 6, 12.

He that is not with me, is against me; and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth abroad, Matth. 12. 30.

— Let them return unto thee, but return not thou unto them, Jer. 15. 5.

Tell me (O thou whom my soul loveth) where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon; for why should I be as one that turneth aside by (or, unto) the flocks of thy Companions? Cant. 1. 7.

Et vitæ in deliciis immorantibus non potest, ut dicitur, communionem habere. Ignatius, Episc. Malus Ecclesie Præpositus deserti cum sua communione potest, imo debet. Cypris 1. 1. Ep. 4.

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Principles of

CHRISTIANITY

A Delineation of the Principles and Doctrines of the Christian Religion, as they are contained in the Holy Scriptures, and as they are explained by the Fathers and Councils of the Church.

By J. H. BURTON, D.D., Bishop of Salisbury.

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Vol. II. contains the Principles of the Christian Religion, as they are contained in the Holy Scriptures, and as they are explained by the Fathers and Councils of the Church.

Vol. III. contains the Principles of the Christian Religion, as they are contained in the Holy Scriptures, and as they are explained by the Fathers and Councils of the Church.

*A Dissuasive unto the People of God, from attending
the Ministry (so called) of those, who preach by ver-
tue of an (Apocryphal) Ordination, received from
an Order of men, commonly stiled, LORD
BISHOPS.*

Take heed whom you hear.



THE Idolatrous madness of the Common-Prayer-
Book-worship, hath of late been made so manifest
to all the Household of Faith in the Nation, that my
confidence is great, that it shall not proceed any
further to ensnare and pollute any of the Sons
and Daughters of God, by joyning in the offering
up of such strange fire unto him. And though there
be some, who, having formerly cast it off as a menstruous rag of Popish
devotion, are of late, with the Dog, returned unto their vomit, ma-
king themselves transgressors by building up, what once they destroy-
ed; yet God (I trust) will suddenly stop and heal this unclean issue
in the body of his People, and so curse the root of this bitterness,
that it shall not bring forth much fruit, nor many be defiled with it.
Yea, though a second Repentance in such cases, be not a fruit that
groweth very plentifully on the Tree of flesh and blood, yet am I not
without all hope but that through the grace and mercy of God, some
of those may awaken, and recover themselves out of this Snare of
Satan, whose foot hath been taken, and is (at present) held in it.
I confess the World hath of late given a furious on-set and charge
upon the Saints of God amongst us, yea, upon all that professed any
thing (almost) after the manner of Saints, and as becometh the Go-
spel, to cause them to give back from that holy ground which they
had gained, and on which they stood; Neither is it any marvel, there
being so many millions of a stricter Profession in the Nation, that all
of them should not prove valiant in fights; or that some of them, for

test of the fiery Furnace, being her seven times hotter than ordinary, should not bow down to the golden Image of that Worship, which the *Nebuchadnezzar*-like Interest of the *Prelatical* party in the Nation had set up. But leaving those, who tremble to make gods of men, by ascribing unto them the incommunicable property or prerogative of God, in appointing and imposing his own Worship, unto the safeguarding of his blessing upon those convictions of the Truth, which have subdued their Judgments and Consciences under it; and those that are turned aside like a deceitful [or, warped] bow, unto the mercies of God, for the bringing of them back again from *Babylon* unto *Sion*, that they be not surprized in the vengeance of *Babylon*, (which is now even at the door) I shall proceed to tender unto the Consciences of those, whose sovereign interest it is to approve themselves thoroughly unto God, a few Considerations, by the light whereof they may see how unlawful it is (especially as the case now standeth) to be *Heavers*, where men of Episcopal Ordination, by vertue hereof are the *Teachers*.

CONSIDERATION I.

That Authority of Teaching; wherewith the Teachers we speak of are invested, by that kind of Bishop which presumes to give it, is a meer nullity and lye. The Gospel knows no Bishop of such a character or complexion, as are appropriately theirs, who claim and exercise a power as of obtruding upon Christ and his Churches, on the one hand, what persons they please in the name of Ministers, or Teachers, (only if they be desirous to accept of this sacred investiture from their hand;) so on the other hand, to keep back such from their Service, whom both the one and the other, most desire in this relation, only because God hath not given them Darknes for a Vision, or sent them this *strong delusion*, confidently to imagine, that they see Prelates, or *Diocesan* Bishops, walking like Angels in the plains of the Gospel, and Christ giving them power to prescribe in his Church what forms of Worship, be they never so uncouth, and what Ceremonies, be they never so apish, they please. Besides many other Writings, both formerly, and more lately published, which demonstrate the Generation of such Bishops to be Aliens and Strangers to the Laws and Statutes of the Common-wealth of Israel, *The Un-Bishoping of Timothy and Titus, with the Angel of the Church of Ephesus* (a Book first compiled and printed, Anno 1636, and lately reprinted, with sundry Enlargements, by the Learned Gentleman, *William Prynn* Esq;) clearly

clearly vindicates the Gospel from all countenance with them, and sends them to seek their pedigree and original, where they will be ashamed to find it. And (doubtless) the contest about Prelatical Usurpations had been compromised long before this, and the Churches of Christ discharged of such unsupportable burdens, were not all disputes against carnal Interests; like gapings against an Oven, and the Truth, though *Speaking with the tongues of Men and Angels*, a Barbarian unto those, whose Judgements and Consciences are under an arrest by the pomp and grandure, either *in Spe*, or *in Re*, of this present world: For to reason Un-bewitched, it cannot (lightly) but appear an incredibility of the first Magnitude, that Christ should appoint such an High Officer in his Church, as the *Diocesan*, and especially the *Metropolitan* Bishop beareth himself with an importune and high hand to be; and yet neither give them any name whereby to be known or distinguished from others, nor yet assign them any work or Service at all, in, or for the Church. When Christ ASCENDED on High, and gave gifts unto men, *he gave some Apostles; and some Prophets; and some Evangelists; and some Pastors and Teachers*: but we hear of none given, either Lord Bishops, Diocesans, or Metropolitans. When he DESCENDED into Hell [or, into the lower parts of the Earth] themselves will not plead, that he brought them up from thence. Therefore (without controversy) they are no plants of Christ planting; neither is there any thing in the Church for them to do: For the whole work that concerns the spiritual welfare of the Church from first to last, is committed to the Church-Officers lately named by the Apostle, as being every way sufficient for the effectual performance of it. This the Context speaks plainly enough, and without a Parable: *He gave some Apostles, — and some Pastors and Teachers; For the perfecting of the Saints, for the work of the Ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; till we all come in the Unity of the Faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ; That we henceforth be no more Children tossed to and fro, &c. Ephes. 4. 11, 12, 13, 14.* So that there is no empty or void space in the spiritual Concernments of the Church, for our *Diocesan* Bishops to thrust in with their importune and officious interposure; *Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers*; have the whole heritage of this work divided amongst them by the Lord Christ himself. Or if there be any thing left for our Lord Bishops to do by way of service to the Church, it is to teach them, as *Gideon* taught the men of *Succoth*, with thorns and Briers, to perfect them through sufferings, and so to prepare them for their glory: this service

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(I confess) they do this with great diligence, and very affectionally. Nevertheless, *Christ* never set them up in his Church, to do either this or any other service unto it: only he permitted them, whilst the Church slept, to convey themselves slily into it: And because the teaching of the members hereof by Afflictions, is a necessary work, and most proper to be done by the vilest and most unworthy of men, therefore (I conceive) he hath judged it meet to afford an opportunity to this Generation of men, to be the Actors in chief in it. But now that kind of Bishop we speak of, being no Gospel Creature, nor any wayes derived or descended from *Christ*, it is a clear case that he hath no right of authority or power from him (and from any other he cannot have it) to exercise any Ecclesiastical function at all, much lesse to create, or make any Gospel Minister. It is a true rule, *Nun Entis nulla sunt affectiones, nulla est efficacia*; That which is not, hath not wherewith to act, or operate. So that as the Apostle *Peter* said to the Cripple, *Silver and Gold have I none; but such as I have give I unto thee.* (Acts 3.6.) Our Diocesan Bishops may on the contrary say unto those that come unto them for Authority and Power to preach the Gospel, *Silver and Gold we have in abundance, but that which we have, we will not give unto you; but what we have not, that we freely give unto you; Go, and preach the Gospel* [although neither do they give this their *nothing* very freely, unless it be in such a sense, wherein a Merchant may be said to part with his bad commodity very freely, or willingly, when he knows he shall receive more money for it than it is worth] Therefore they, who embrace men Episcopally ordained, as Teachers sent by *Christ*, and upon this account hear them, set their eyes upon that which is not, yea, and do homage unto an Idol.

CONSIDERATION II.

To afford our presence and attention unto men preaching by *Episcopal* Authority, is to strengthen the *Hierarchical* Interest, to credit and countenance the horrid Usurpations of the Prelatical Order, in, and over the Churches of *Christ*; and consequently, to involve our selves in the guilt of all those outrages of oppression and cruelty, whereby they daily waste and wear out the Saints of God amongst them: and so to render our selves justly liable to partake with them in their plagues, when God shall bring the day of their vengeance upon them. To own those for our Ministers and Teachers, who are sent forth by them to teach (and own them for such we do, if we fre-

frequently, or ordinarily, hear them) is to own those who send them, and to set to our seal, and give them testimony, that they are intrusted, and invested by *Christ*, with that authority and power, in the name (or by the presence rather) of which they so send them. For what can we (lightly) do to commend them unto the world upon higher terms, than by such our approbation of them? Or were we desirous, as far as lieth in us, to make the mountain of their present power so strong that it should never be moved, by what other means more probable, or promising, could we endeavour, or attempt it? For who, though but in face a *Christian*, will not fear to have a hand in the rooting out, yea, or in opposing, such men, or such an order of men, amongst them, who have this testimony from serious and well-advised *Christians*, that *Jesus Christ* hath entrusted them with the care, and power of providing meet and worthy Ministers for all his Churches round about them? *Verily, Verily, I say unto you*, (saith *Christ* *John* 13. 20.) *If I send any*, (So our former Translation, and so the Original) *he that receiveth him, receiveth me; and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me*. He is said to receive a Minister, or messenger, sent by *Christ*, who heareth him, (as appeareth by the parallel place, *Luke* 10. 16.) that is, who heareth him, as, or because, sent by *Christ*; or, who heareth his Doctrine with reverence and submission, and so as to own it. Now the receiving of *Christ* (in his Messengers, or, in their Doctrine) is such an act which tendeth highly to the honour of *Christ*, and so the confirmation and enlargement of his interest in the world, and is mentioned under such a consideration as this, in the words now cited: Therefore upon the same account, he that receiveth, or heareth, persons sent by our *Apostolical* Bishops to preach, receiveth them, and hereby contributeth not a little towards the establishment of them in the possession of that exorbitant and monstrous power, by which they tyrannize over the consciences and comforts of those, that are loyal and faithful unto *Jesus Christ*, and so (as hath been said) becomes accessary to all the sufferings of the Saints, by means of that power, in those mens hands. This is another consideration dissuading the people of God from attending upon Episcopal Equivalaries in their work of preaching.

CONSIDERATION III.

The hearing of men sent by the Bishops, being (as was now shewed) a receiving of these Bishops themselves (in the sense declared) must needs be a walking uncharitably towards them, and a means to keep their

their foot fast in that snare of death, wherein it is at present to fast, and to put far from them the happy day of repentance from their unchristian usurpations (together with many other high misdemeanours accompanying these) whereby they might be saved. For when they shall see the servants of God (especially the more knowing, and better advised of them) rejoycing in the light of Ministers of their making, and sending forth, how shall they not applaud themselves in their office, yes, and think they do both God, and his Churches special service, by supplying these from time to time with men of worth, who are able to speak unto them words, by which they hope they may, or shall be saved? Men that receive so large a testimony of the usefulness of their callings, and goodness of their practises and walkings in them, from persons so considerable as those mentioned, are not like to resent, or suspect, any such evil in either, for which they need any open, or solemn repentance. So that for the servants of God to honour, with their attendance, the Ministry of men preaching by Episcopal authority, is (in reality of construction) a flattering of the Bishops themselves; and (doutless) what *Solomon* speaks (*Prov.* 26. 28.) of a *flattering mouth*, as viz. that it *worketh ruine*, is altogether as true of *flattering* actions, by which men may be flattered into ruine, as well as by words of like import. Now though the Bishops we speak of be guilty of the blood of many thousands of precious souls, for whom *Christ* dyed, partly by thrusting out of the Vineyard of *Christ* many true and faithful labourers, which *Christ* himself had sent in thither; partly by keeping out many others of like worthy character, not permitting any entrance, but onely by the polluted door of their Ordination, by which very few, or none, qualified aright for the Ministry, can obtain leave of their consciences to enter; but chiefly by setting over them, or obtruding upon them, ignorant, scandalous, and prophane persons, for spiritual Guides, besides many other exemplary misdemeanours, and unworthy practises, in their own lives and conversations? although (I say) our Bishops (so called) do by these means, without the least regret, or remorse of conscience, bring upon their heads the blood of many thousand precious souls, yet will not this justify, or excuse the children of God, if they shall act anything, which is like to further the perdition of their souls, the salvation whereof, (the enormous wickedness of the men notwithstanding) they stand bound, both by the Law of charity, and in conscience towards God, not to hinder (as by encouraging, or hardening them in any evil way) but to promote with the best of their understanding. Therefore,

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CONSIDERATION IV.

As the Apostle (*2 Thes. 3. 6, 14.*) prescribeth unto the Saints, the separating, or withdrawing of themselves from a Brother, that walketh *unordinately*, as a proper and christian means to make him ashamed (that is, to bring him to repentance, by occasioning him to reflect upon the evil of his way more seriously, and so to further his salvation) in like manner, the withdrawing of good *Christians* from the Prelates in their Ministers (in whose creation, and imposition upon Churches, they walk most disorderly) being a means of a promising and likely import, to make them ashamed of such their Prelatical presumptions and misde-moors, cannot in reason, or in conscience, but be interpreted as a matter of duty lying upon them to practise: If men have any thing of men, any spark of ingenuity in them, any sence of interest either with God or men, they cannot but be severely jealous of such wayes and doings; upon which the Generation of the Righteous shall set the black brand of their dis-approbation, by refusing all communion and fellowship with them, even at a distance; and this out of Conscience towards God, and for fear of his displeasure.

CONSIDERATION V.

To accept, with contentment and satisfaction, of spiritual means, proffered, or conveyed unto us, by a false authority, or by persons no wayes interestted, or intrusted by *Christ*, is, as far as in us lyeth, to make void, or (however) to discredit, the right and just title of those, upon whom *Christ* hath (indeed) conferred this trust and honour: and as he, who renting another man's Ground, shall turn Tenant, and pay his Rent to a false Land-lord, upon a pretended claim made by him of right to the said Lands, much weakneth and disableth the title of the true: In like manner, he that from time to time shall honour with his presence and attention, a Ministry advanced by such an order of men, who have no right, but only a frivolous and empty pretext of right, to impose Ministers upon *Christian* Congregations, must needs hereby obscure and wrong the just title and claim, which the Churches of *Christ* have, by the gracious donation and grant of *Christ*, to chuse, ordain, and set over themselves Pastors and Teachers.

CONSIDERATION VI.

For a man not to depend upon God for such a blessing upon his diligent and prudent endeavours, in a lawful calling, which shall supply

and furnish him with things needful for this present life, or not to be content with such supplies in this kind, which the blessing of God upon his honest labours, furnisheth him with; but to turn aside into dishonest wayes, as of theft, deceit, &c. through fear of want, or of being starved, or the like; any of these practices is a (constructive) complaining of the Providence of God unto the World (or rather, indeed, unto the Devil :) And for *Christians* to seek their spiritual food at those lips, which not God, but his enemies have opened, and polluted, by touching them with a dead coal from their Altar, is it of any better interpretation, than a professed jealousie, or doubtfulness of mind, whether *Christ* will nourish them with the Words of eternal Life, and make them wise unto Salvation, in case they should strictly confine and keep themselves to the use of such means only which he hath sanctified, and which are unquestionably approved by him, especially, when like the Waters of *Sileam*, they run but softly, and not embolden their Consciences to comport with such other means for their edification, the lawfulness whereof, as themselves formerly scrupled, so many thousands of the Saints absolutely deny at this day, not daring to accept of any soul-provisions promised or pretended by them.

CONSIDERATION VII.

To undermine and defeat the counsels and attempts of men, *whoresist the Truth* (as *Jannes* and *Jambres* did *Moses*, 2 Tim. 3. 8.) by means and wayes lawful and suitable to the Gospel, and which are within our power, is (without controversie) a duty lying upon all men: how much more upon all Saints? That our Lord Bishops are deep in the condemnation of resisting the Truth; and this much after the same manner, wherein those *Egyptian* Sorcerers resisted *Moses* (namely, by promoting a counterfeit and false worship and service of God, like unto the true: as those Sorcerers deluded *Pharaoh* and the *Egyptians*, by counterfeiting those real and true Miracles which *Moses* wrought, and hereby sought to frustrate *Moses* his Negotiation with *Pharaoh* about the *Israelites* deliverance) is no *Paradox*, nor Problem [or difficult question] amongst true and knowing Christians. Again, that a detection or discovery of the folly or madness of those, who either thus, or in any other way, resist the truth (for the Scripture supposeth a designed resistance of the Truth to be madness, or folly in her exaltation, in whomsoever it be found, 2 Pet. 2. 16. 2 Tim. 3. 9.) is an effectual means to supercede their wickedness in that kind, and to prevent their further progresse in their course, the
holy,

holy Ghost himself informeth us: *Banish* [men of corrupt minds, and resisting the Truth] *shall proceed no further: for their folly* [or, madness] *shall be manifest unto all men, as theirs also was*, 2 Tim. 3. 9. Now then, if the refraining of the Saints from those spiritual Tables, which are spread by the Bishops (I mean, from the Preachments of men of their anoyning) be a proper and likely means to manifest their folly unto the world, in their hostile devices and attempts against the Truth, it is (certainly) a duty incumbent upon them to use such abstinence. That this abstinence is a means promising the happy effect mentioned, may be conceived by that discovery, which *David's* absence once and again from *Saul's* Table, made of *Saul's* wickedness, in his unreasonable malice against *David*, and consequently against God himself. The Historical Passage hereof may be read, 1 Sam. 20. from vers. 24. to the end of vers. 34. For, as *Saul*, finding *David's* accustomed place at his Table empty twice together, was hereby provoked to shew himself in his colours of wretchedness and impiety: So is it not unlike but that sober and good men, by a constant absenting themselves from Ministers of the Hierarchical Union, on whose Ministry they had formerly been wont to attend, will draw out into the view of all men, that same *error*, that folly, or madness, in their great Lords and Masters (the Bishops) which being discovered, will render them the general abhorring of men, and so cause them to fall like Lightning from the Heaven of their Glory and put a period to their Kingdom. And as the providence of God delivered *David* from the malicious and bloody rage of *Saul*, wherewith he pursued him upon his absence from his Table; so may the good People of God expect protection from on high, in case the said Bishops, making themselves aggrieved at their departure from their spiritual provisions, which they have ordained for them, shall attempt to magnific themselves in wrath and revenge against them. Besides, the general refraining of sober and understanding *Christians* from the Ministry of a Prelatical erection, which many of them had (in the simplicity of their hearts) formerly frequented, cannot but occasion persons of ingenuous and free spirits, to enquire into the grounds and reasons hereof; in which enquiry, very probable it is that they will discover, or be led to somewhat, either in the Office, or Usurpations, of the Prelatical Order, as the just occasion of it; the consideration whereof may cause them also to turn Apostates from their former esteem and approbation of them.

CONSIDERATION VIII.

If we speak of the generality of those Ministers, who retain the Signature

nature of Prelatical hands laid upon them, and have not some wayes of other defaced it, we may truly say (in the Scripture Phrase, *Mic. 7. 4.*) *This best of them is as a Bryar, the most upright is sharper than a thorn-bedge.* Few Sermons are preached by them, in which something is not uttered, that is justly offensive and grievous to the Spirits of holy and good men. Yes, of these Apothecaries, such as are accounted both the most honest, and skilful, in their profession, and to vend the best, and wholiemest Druggs, and Receipts, have one or other dead fly (and commonly more then one) in their Oynment, which causeth it to cast forth a stinking savour in the Nostrils of those who have their senses extorted to discern both good and evil. Neither can it in reason be expected otherwise: For being sworn Vassals to the Prelatical Interest and Design, and this being to subject the power of godliness unto the form, and so to uphold their super-numerary Function, Dignity, and tyrannical Grandure, in, and over the Churches of *Christ*, the Ministers we speak of are ever and anon, or at times, necessitated to act their parts in opposition to the holy desires and design of the true and faithful servants of God, whose hearts are deeply set within them for the advancement of the power of godliness in the world, above the form of it, and not to acknowledge, or do homage unto any person, or persons, claiming dominion over their faith, but unto *Christ* onely. The particulars, by one, or more of which, the said Ministers are wont to make the hearts of persons truly godly, heavy and sad, are these (with their fellows) 1. They are expressly enjoyned by their Patent to shew their child-like (that I say, not blind) obedience to their Grand-fathers (the Bishops) by saying over their Creed, and their *Pater-Noster*, over, and over, once (at least) every month, together with the rest of the devices comprehended under the Title of *Common-Prayer*, and this publickly, and in the face of their Congregation, appearing also in their Masters Livery [I mean, the Surplice] that all men may know to whom they belong, and whose Servants they are. This is one great nuisance done by these men to the spirits of those who truly fear God. 2. They bow down their necks to the yoke of Ceremonies, and yeeld that observance to the fopperies of men, which is due to the most weighty precepts of God. 3. There are few of them, who content themselves with the simple observation of these Ceremonies, but think it their duty to take pitty on them, being so generally hated, opposed, and condemned, and to speak a good word for them now and then, and to justify both the practice and imposition of them. 4. There are not many of those, that are least obnoxious amongst them, but will think it, either their duty, or their wisdom,

wisdom, or both, to steal an Opportunity (sometimes) to speak honourably of their gracious Lords and Benefactors, to commend their Function as Sacred, and of Divine Institution, and as singularly necessary for the Peace and good Government of the Church, &c. 5. Who is there of them, but, be he never so concise and short in his Prayer before his Sermon, yet alloweth a large room for the mention of his Reverend, if not Right Reverend Fathers in God; (as if they suspected that God would not know that they meant them, unless they presented them in their *Pontificalibus* before him) yea, and giveth flattering and unbeseeming Titles to other great persons also? 6. They are the smallest number of them, who will not *semel in anno* (at least) teach (in effect) the importune Doctrine of *blind Obedience* to Superiours, both Ecclesiastical and Civil: It is like, they will not teach this Obedience under the term of, *blind*, because Protestant Writers have made it infamous amongst persons of this profession, by oft charging the Doctrine of *BLIND Obedience*, as *Antichristian*, upon the *Jesuites*. But when they fall upon hammering this naye (I mean of obedience and subjection to Superiours) they so forge it, as that they leave no liberty or freedom of judgment, or conscience, to inferiours, to judge of the lawfulness, and unlawfulness of the Superiours command; but conclude those amongst transgressors, and persons worthy severe punishment, that refuse to conform themselves to their injunctions, though their judgments and consciences conclude them never to (manifestly) unlawful. And what is this, but (in effect) to preach and press the ungodly, yea, unmanly doctrine of *blind Obedience*? Yea, some of them do not forbear to place the Perfection, or highest strain of that Mortification and self-denial, which they preach, in that kind of blind Obedience to Superiours, which hath been mentioned. 7. They are not a few of those that are of best esteem in the said party of Ministers, who will not find, or take occasion (sometimes) to vent themselves in unworthy and base reflections upon the Power of Godliness, and upon persons more tenderly conscientious than themselves, and who strain at the *Camels*, which they swallow. 8. (and lastly,) There is hardly one of a thousand of them, that (according to their duty) will cry aloud, and lift up their Voice like a Trumpet, to shew their great Lords and Masters their great transgressions, in persecuting the Servants of the living God, in suppressing their *Christian* and just Liberties, in thrusting their zealous and faithful Teachers out of the Sanctuary, in obtruding upon them dumb Dogges (or worse than dumb) or greedy Wolves, in their stead; in exasperating the spirits of Rulers against them, and representing them as persons dangerous to the State, and troublers

troublers of its Peace; in assenting unto, if not procuring the making of hard and cruel Laws against them, (with the like.) These are part of the unhappy wayes and practices, by which even our best Preachers of the Episcopal Character, are alwayes apt, and often wont, to make sad the spirits of holy and good men, when they hear them: so that though they may (possibly) hear several Sermons from them, from none of which they shall actually suffer in any of these kinds; yet they cannot at any time go to hear them with any reasonable Security, but that some or other of this Gall and Vinegar will be given them to drink. This then is another Consideration to take off our edge from hearing them.

CONSIDERATION IX.

As for the generality, or far greater part of the body of that Ministry, from which we endeavour to perswade good men to turn away, they are a company of sad souls, men, who (according to the Proverb) *Animum habent pro sale*; they have souls serving only to preserve their bodies from putrifying: Some of them profoundly ignorant, scarce understanding their *Kubrick*, or how to finde out the Psalmes and Lessons appointed for the day in the Bishops Calendar: others, drown'd in sensuality, desperately debauched, much fitter to be made Priests to serve at the Pagan Altars of *Bacchus*, and *Venus*, than to minister the Holy things of *Jesui Christ*: others possessed with a spirit of prophaneſs, which maketh them bold to take the Name of God in vain, and to make frothy jests and conceits of things most sacred: Others wolfishly covetous and cruel, rigorously exacting of their People the *utmost Farthing* of Wages, which the Law alloweth, for the smallest pittance of Work, or Service, which the Law tolerateth. All these have (as it were) given hostages to Satan, to secure him that they will never make any hostile attempt upon him, nor disturb him in his possession of any soul under his power. Now this retrenchmentary party of the Ministry we speak of, are *colleagues*, fellow-members of the same body of Ministers, with those, whose Character was given in the former Consideration, and to whom we here likewise gave the preeminence in worth, amongst and above all their fellows: So that those respects, and that honour, which we cast upon these in our attendance upon their Ministry, redound (in part at least) unto the others also: and so by countenancing the worthiest and best, of this disordered order, we countenance and comfort the worst and vilest likewise; For (as the Apostle saith) *If one member be honoured, all the members*
rejoyce

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rejoyce with it, 1 Cor. 12. 26. [viz. as being partakers of that honor which is done unto it:] In like manner, when we confer the honour of our presence upon such of the Episcopal Clergy, who are least obnoxious, we encourage and rejoyce the heart, even of the refuse and tail of this Clergy also, these being flesh of their flesh, and bone of their bone, and all of them in their calling to the Ministry, descended from the loyns (or hands rather) of the same Ghostly Fathers, the Bishops. Now for *Christians* to honour that (though at a distance, and in a collateral way only) which *Christ* himself hath pronounced to be good for nothing, no, not so much as for the Dunghil, but only to be cast out, and trodden under foot by men, (Mat. 5. 13. with Luke 14. 33, 34, 35.) must needs be judged a very great dis-service unto him, and of a most ungrateful resentment with him.

CONSIDERATION X.

Whereas the Ordination of Ministers, when regularly and duly performed, is of a very promising consequence unto their Ministry, the blessing of God (as it were of course) following it; the Ordination of the *Prelatical* Clergy, being not only contrary to the Laws established by *Christ*, in the Common-wealth of *Israel*, for the government thereof, but also managed and transacted by men that are no friends of God, nor lovers of his Saints, nor of the purity of his Worship, nor of the power of Godliness, is, in respect of the success of their Ministry, much more threatening, than promising, God being no wayes like to give any testimony from Heaven unto them, being sent forth into his work upon terms so highly dishonourable and displeasing to him; for, the Prayers, by which the Minister to be ordained, is recommended unto the Grace and Blessing of God, in the work of the Ministry, by those that are present, and assisting in the business, being (upon the matter) the *All in All*, of, or in, the transaction (for laying on of hands is only a Ceremony, and questioned by some whether necessary, yea, or fitting, to be used in these dayes) and the sacrifice of the wicked being an abomination unto the Lord, as the Prayer of the upright is his delight, (Prov. 15. 8.) we have but a quick-sand for a foundation of any hope, that Ministers *Prelatically* ordained, are sent forth unto the great work of the Gospel, with a blessing, and not rather under a curse. Besides, suppose we (for argument sake) that our Lord Bishops, and their Chaplains (who are the great, if not the only doers, in the Solemnities of their Ordination) were lovers of God indeed, and no wayes disaffected against persons truly holy and conscientious; yet the Ministers

sters ordained by them, not being to serve or minister unto them in the most important affairs of their souls, it is not like that their prayers for them, or for the blessing of God upon their labours in preaching, would be (in any degree) so effectually fervent, as the prayers, where with the Ministers, who are by the particular Churches of the Saints chosen to serve them, in the high concernments of their eternal salvation, are, by them solemnly assembled, with prayer and fasting for the purpose, presented unto God in the day of their Ordination. That Charity is rare, which keepeth not her self warmer at home than abroad.

CONSIDERATION XI.

Many who at first intended nothing more in hearing the Ministers we speak of, but their own *Christian* Edification and Comfort, and nothing lesse than to become Proselytes to their dead forms of imposed worship, or to comport with them in their *detestable things* (Ezek. 7. 20. I mean their Fanatick Ceremonies) or to approve of their *Hierarchical* Mission into the Vineyard of *Christ*, &c. yet by a frequent and familiar converse with them in their Ministry, have in time (and some in a very short time) been so transformed in their Judgements & Consciences, as to swallow all these Camels without straining, and to make one spirit with them in all their *Antichristian* Principles and Practices. The heat of that pleasure and contentment which we sometimes take in the commendable and worthy sayings or doings of men, proves a snare unto us to fall in with them in sayings and doings of a contrary import, and which are of a very dangerous, if not destructive consequence unto us: so that in this sense it is not only true, that *יְהוֹשֻׁעַ הַנָּזִיר*, evil homilies, or discourses (as the Apostle expresses himself with the heathen Poet, 1 Cor. 15. 33.) but even *יְהוֹשֻׁעַ הַנָּזִיר*, good and worthy communications, many times, occasionally, and from some kind of men, *corrupt good manners*. The unsound and rootten Doctrines of the *Pharisees* (as of the *Sadducees* also) were (it seems) of a leavening nature, apt to spread, and to insinuate themselves into the minds, and judgements, and affections of men. Our Saviour himself declareth this unto us, partly by comparing them unto leaven, but more plainly by admonishing the people: yea, his Disciples themselves, over and over, to look to themselves that they were not ensnared with them: *Then Jesus said unto them, TAKE HEED and BEWARE of the leaven of the Pharisees, &c.* Mar. 16. 6. See also *Mark* 8. 15. Now one main reason why their evil and unsound Doctrines were so catching, and likely by little and little

little to gain in the approbations and consents of their Hearers. (was in all probability) their frequent teachings, and zealous pressings, of many wholesome and savory Doctrines and Truths, according to the tenour and true intent of *Moses's* Law; for as many authorities that is unserviceable, and worth little, by reason of some grand defect that is not easily discerned; is yet bought and sold at a considerable rate,

Quod pulchri clangor, brevis quod caput, ardua cervix.

by reason of some features that are curiously commendable in them. In like manner many a mans Ministry may be approved & swallowed, root and branch, head and tail, by the brokery and mediation of some choice Sermons, or points of Doctrine, managed and handled effectually, or however to the high contentment of the Hearer, although this Ministry taken in the whole body, or course of it, be not so well and safely calculated for the saving of the Soul. I have heard of (and, in in part, known) some, to whom, when they first became hearers of the Prelatical Clergy, their imposed Common-Prayer, their lumber of Ceremonies, their Hierarchy, with all their implements and tinkers; &c. were *Hay, Stubble and Wood*, yea, or rather, *Dung and Filthiness*; who notwithstanding, by the droppings of the tongues of these men into their ears, became, after no long time neither, so bewitched in their Judgments and Consciences, that all these were conceived by them as *Silver, Gold, and precious Stones*. Good words are oft-times too hard for good meanings, and lead men, honestly disposed, into a snare: nor is there any Method more commodious or promising unto men, whose design it is to work sober and good men out of a love and liking of some part of those Truths, which at present they believe, then by giving them their fill of satisfaction and contentment in some others of them.

CONSIDERATION XII.

Although we be in some strait yet to combine with any corrupt Interest or Correspondency, for accommodation or help; or to fall in with men, who have not God amongst them, however they may be otherwise of a very promising aspect unto us, hath often, if not always, been of dangerous consequence unto those, that have attempted and expected, the bettering of their condition in such a way. When *Amaziah*, King of *Judah*, judging himself unable to wage war against the Children of Mount *Sir*, with his own strength, had hired

an hundred thousand **MIGHTY MEN OF VALOUR** and of Israel, for an hundred Talents of Silver, there was sent unto him a Man of God with this message; *O King, let not the Army of Israel go with thee; for the Lord is not with Israel, &c.* 2 Chron. 25. 6, 7. So the People of God seeking for help, first of the *Assyrians*, and afterwards of the *Egyptians*, even when they were in an afflicted and hard condition, got nothing by these applications but sorrow and shame: God threatened them by his Prophet *Jeremy*; *Thou shalt also be ashamed of Egypt, as thou wast ashamed of Assyria*, Jer. 2. 36. The Scripture is pregnant with this Truth: See *Isa. 8. 6, 7*. That the Prelatical Interest is Eccentricital to the Glory of God, in the Cause and Kingdom of *Jesus Christ*, runs in a Channel by it self, a-part from; and in opposition to these, and consequently is carnal and corrupt, and obnoxious to the displeasure of God, needeth no anxious demonstration unto those, the eyes of whose minds are not bewitched and blinded with it; however, somewhat hath been argued to the point already in these papers, and somewhat more may be added before we conclude: and the question (if yet a question it must be) hath been largely discussed, and learnedly decided by others. As for the late reviving of this Interest amongst us, after it had lain sick, and languishing, ready to have given up the Ghost for many years together: it cannot be looked upon with a spiritually-discerning eye, but (what is frequently observed in long and wasting sicknesses) a lightning before death: and as the setting up of *Dagon* the second time in his place, after he had once fallen upon his face to the Earth, before the Ark of God, occasioned his second downfall, by which he lost his head (*1 Sam. 5. 3, 4*.) so, according to the course of divine Providence, the lifting up of our Bishops from the gates of death, is like to prepare the way to their second death, or fall, from whence there will be no redemption. Now, the Ministers of whom we speak all this while, being of the *Prelatical* descent, are members, or appertenances of this (I mean the *Prelatical*) Order, and have a great venture in the same bottom with their Ghostly-Fathers: So that suppose we should be somewhat scanted for Soul-accommodations, or much straitened for want of spiritual provisions otherwise, yet to have recourse unto these men (yea, be it unto the best of them) in their Ministry, for supplies in this kind, with an expectation that they should bless us, or befriend us in our need, is to comport with the unhallowed Interest we speak of, and to seek help of such a Generation or Association of men, whom God (as the Scripture saith) *beholdeth afar off*, taking no pleasure to be amongst them: and consequently, such an application of our selves for aid and relief, is like to turn

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to no better an account unto us, than a disappointment, if not a far worse inconvenience.

CONSIDERATION XIII.

As far the greater number of the good People of God in this Nation stand now perswaded in their Judgments and Consciences, touching the hearing of Ministers ordained by a power ill-affected to *Jesus Christ* and his Interest on Earth, it is just matter of scandal and offence to the weaker sort of this people, and of sorrow and sadness of heart to many of them that are more spiritual, and knowing, to understand, or hear, that any of their *Christian Brethren*, formerly united unto them in the same mind and judgment against all the Superstitious and *Antichristian* doings amongst us, are (frequently) present in those Assemblies, unto whom men sent unto them by the Prelates, onely, presume notwithstanding to speak in the name of God, bearing themselves as the Embassadors of *Christ*, lawfully commissioned by him for the Service they perform. Now the Scripture oft speaks of scandalizing, in one kind or other, those that are weak in the Faith, as of a very sinful and Un-*Christian* misdemeanor in those who are called *Christians*, and of a provoking resentment with *Christ* himself: *But if thy Brother be grieved with thy meat* [when as thy life and health may be preserved with such meats otherwise, which will not offend, or grieve him] *now walkest thou not charitably.* *Destroy not him with thy meat* [that is, eat no such meat, the eating whereof by thee, may very possibly through the scandal given thereby, prove his destruction] *for whom Christ died,* Rom. 14. 15. *For meat destroy not the work of God.* *All things indeed are pure, but it is evil for that man that eateth with offence.* *It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy Brother stumbleth, or is offended, or made weak.* *Hast thou faith? Have it to thy self before God.* *Happy is he that condemneth not himself* [namely by scandalizing a weak Brother] *in that thing which he alloweth* [as lawful for him to do] Rom. 14. 20, 21, 22. *For if any man see thee which hast knowledge, sit at meat in the Idols Temple, shall not the Conscience of him that is weak, be emboldned to eat those things that are offered to Idols: and through thy knowledge shall the weak Brother perish, for whom Christ died.* *But when ye sin so against the Brethren, and wound their weak Conscience, ye sin against Christ,* [grieving and endangering those, who believe in him, and therefore are dear unto him] 1 Cor. 8. 10, 11, 12. *And whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, it is better for him that a Millstone were hanged about his neck, and he*

Were it not the Sin, Mark p. 423. See also Matth. 18. 6. Luke 17. 1, 2. The clear result of these, and other-like sayings of the Holy Ghost, is, that to scandalize, offend, or grieve any weak Believer, yea though it be but by an undue exercise of our lawful liberty (lawful, I mean, otherwise,) is very unworthy the profession of the Gospel, and an indignity offered unto *Jesus Christ*, sorely threatening him that shall offer it, without repentance. It is true, where there is any obligation upon men by way of precept, or duty, to do that, at which a weak *Christian* is offended, here is no scandal, or offence given, but only taken; and if any man be offended in this case, he must bear the burthen of his ignorance himself. God is to be obeyed, though the whole world should be offended at it. But that it should be incumbent or necessary, by any precept or command from God, to hear (at least ordinarily, and from day to day) Ministers of a Lordly creation, or Prelatical tincture, never yet (I suppose) came within the Verge of any mans thoughts, unlesse (haply) of some Episcopally addicted above their fellows: nay, the practise hath not found (that I can find or hear of,) any competent Defender of so much as the lawfulness of it, to this day. Therefore if it should be given (by way of Charity) unto those, that have made bold to take the liberty of hearing the Ministers we wor of, that this their practise, simply, and in it self considered, is lawful; yet in the case of so much scandal and offence, as it gives to many thousands of their weak Brethren in the Nation, it becomes in them *Un-Christian* and Unlawful; yea, and it is the more *Un-Christian* and unworthy, in as much as it further causeth much sadness and grief of heart, even unto those that are of more understanding; because, besides the scandal given by it unto the weak, they judge it a practise altogether, and in it self, unwarrantable, as being derogatory unto the Royalities of *Jesus Christ*, as Sole King, and Law-giver unto his Church; of which, as somewhat formerly, so a little more may be said hereafter.

CONSIDERATION XIV.

The practise lately mentioned, and hitherto dissuaded, as it is offensive to all good *Christians*, who either suspect, or conclude, the unlawfulness of it, and in this respect is a breach of the Law of that tender Love, which we owe unto them; so is it of no good confidence, no nor with that Love, which we stand bound to shew even to those persons themselves, whom we hear in such a way, although they be men, who without any order from *Christ*, receive Ordinations and Commissions

Commissions to preach, from his Adversaries; (his Adversaries, at least in their claim and exercise of a co-ordinate power with his, in and over his Churches, which is a broad inroad upon the most sacred and high Prerogative of *the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords*) But though this compliance in the Ministers we speak of, with the said Adversaries of *Christ*, be adjudged by us (and this according to the Truth) a sin very enormous, and of sad consequence to the Saints, and Gospel; yet we, who stand charged by our Great Lord and Master to *love our enemies*, ought not to strengthen the hand, or to harden the heart of these men in their evil way, or to do any thing which is likely to be a snare unto them, to put the good day of Repentance (and consequently Salvation) far from them, but rather unfeignedly to endeavour with the best of our understandings, to convert them from the error of their way, and to save their soul. Now, as the Apostle *Paul* (as we formerly observed) prescribeth the *withdrawing of our selves* from a Brother that walketh inordinately, as a *christian* and proper means to make him *ashamed* of his sinful course; (*2 Thess. 3. 6. & 14.*) and so to move him to abandon and forsake it; So on the contrary, to give the right hand of fellowship unto, or to frequent the company of a person engaged in any sinful way (especially when, or whilst, he is actually walking in this way) must needs be a direct means of encouragement unto him to persist in his way, and to hide Repentance from his eyes: Therefore they who customarily wait at the door of the lips of an ill-procured Ministry, and frequent the Assemblies where such a Ministry is exercised, if they be persons of any note for the knowledge and fear of God, or for a christian and worthy conversation, cannot but stand in his light, who officiates unto them in the way of this Ministry, so that he cannot see the error and danger of his way: For who is like to suspect (much less to be thoroughly convinced) that such a practice or course, is evil, (especially being likewise commodious to the flesh) which receiveth such a weighty testimony that it is lawful and good, as the approbation of persons of great esteem both for light and heat, in matters appertaining unto God, and this testified by their constant, at least frequent correspondings with it?

CONSIDERATION XV.

Yea, such of the Saints and Servants of God, being in any degree considerable in their Generation, who by the practice so frequently put to rebuke in these Papers, shall give countenance, credit, and contentment to the present Generation of a Prelatical Clergy, hereby become

become generative of a succession of birds of the same feather, and threaten *Christians* yet unborn, that they also shall be served with no better then a spurious & illegitimate Ministry. For when those young ones, who intend to serve at the Altar, and separate themselves for the office, and work of the Ministry, shall see and understand, that men sent forth into the *Christian* world by Prelatical Order and Authority, find favour and acceptance in the eyes of good and discerning *Christians*, as well as those that are set over the Churches of the Saints by the holy Ghost himself, how shall not their consciences be hereby emboldned to accept, without scruple, of a Prelatical mission, and through the temptation, strongly to imagine, when they clim'd up, and got in at the window, that they came in by the right door? Yea, upon the same account, how shall not the Prelates themselves, though (at present) abundantly satisfied (in their affections, at least) touching, not the lawfulness onely, but even the necessity of their needless (though not harmless) Office and Function in the Church, be made two-fold more the Sons of confidence, that they are the Stars of the first magnitude in the hand of *Christ*, and that the Axle-tree of the universal Church turns upon their shoulders? But somewhat to this effect in a former Consideration.

CONSIDERATION XVI.

The Holy Ghost taketh notice that such Teachers, unto whom the world (that is; carnal and worldly persons, professing *Christianity*) are wont to resort in the exercise of their Ministry, taking pleasure and contentment therein, are no true Ministers of *Christ*; insinuating withal, that sincere *Christians*, and persons spiritually-minded, more generally (at least) decline them, and deny them their presence at their teachings. The beloved Apostle *John*, speaking of false Teachers, giveth these three characters of them (amongst some others) first, That *they are of the world* (that is, members of the fraternity, or brother-hood, of worldly men; or lovers of this present world;) secondly, That *they speak of the world*; or, (as it might well, and more significantly, I conceive, be translated) *is τὸ κόσμος, out of the world*: meaning, that they are wont first to make enquiry into the world about them, and to inform themselves what humours and practices; what principles, notions, and opinions, are most predominant, and of best resentment, amongst both the great men of the world, and the generality likewise of the People (although these commonly are at too good an agreement in such matters;) and again, what Doctrines and Tenents

Tenents will be well enough born and endured, by both, without any disgust of him that shall teach them; and on the contrary, what are like either to bring him into trouble, or to cast him out of favour, &c. and when they have satisfied themselves, and well understood *the World* in these particulars, they model and mould the tenour of their Ministry and Preaching accordingly, waving those Truths, be they never so importantly necessary to be made known, the preaching or owning of which, they understand is like to shake and weaken (if not wholly to annihilate or destroy) their interest in *the World*; and withall, cunningly wresting and perverting the Word of God in such passages, which truly understood, rise up with great evidence and power against those Doctrines, by which they oblige and insure the World unto them. Upon some such account as this, they are, or may be, said to speak *in* *the World*, or, or out of, *the World*: This is a second character of them. Thirdly, The third (and last) is, that *the World* *heareth them*; meaning, that carnal and earthly-minded Professors of the Gospel (for Professors, either of *Judaism*, or of *Paganism*, cannot be here meant) resort unto their Ministry, are their settled and accustomed hearers, and well apaid and satisfied with their teachings, 1 Joh. 4. 5. Whereunto the Apostle immediately subjoyns; *We are of God; he that knoweth God, heareth us*; [that is, reliseth our Ministry, and with diligence and delight, attendeth on it] *he that is not of God, heareth not us*, &c. clearly implying, that such Teachers, unto whose Ministry carnal Professors and loose Christians, ordinarily and in great numbers are wont to gather themselves, sitting from time to time with contentment and satisfaction under it, are not Teachers of that kind, or of that spirit, with whose Ministry spiritual and sound Christians can long rest satisfied, or care to attend upon. These are those *Strangers*, whom Christ saith *his Sheep will not follow, but will flee from them*, because *they know not their voice*, John 10. 5. Therefore as the Apostle Paul tells the *Corinthians*, that he *could not speak unto them, as unto Spiritual, but as unto carnal*, because they walked in several carnal practices (1 Cor. 3. 1, 3.) So may we without any breach, either of Charity or Truth, look upon those *Christians*, as favouring the things which be of men, more than the things which be of God, who addict themselves to such a Ministry, which is constantly frequented, countenanced, approved, applauded, and delighted in, by such Professors of *Christianity*, who by their ignorance, prophaneis, and all manner of debauchery in their lives and conversations, blaspheme their holy Profession, and stain the glory of the ever-blessed Gospel of God. And is not this the undeniable and appropriate character of the

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the Prelatical Ministry? Do not the dregs and refuse of the Nation, generally, and in all places, gather themselves unto it, and rejoyce over it, being as well apaid with it, as *Micah* was with his Idolatrous Priest made of a silly wandering *Levite*? *Now know I* (saith he) *the Lord will do me good, seeing I have a Levite to my Priest.* Judg. 17. 13. Yea, this Ministry seems to be, both intended by the founders of it (the Prelates) and also form'd and managed by the inferior Clergy, who exercise it, for the gratification of such persons, and this rather, by perswading them that they are truly religious, and in favour with God already, than by making them so indeed. Therefore they who being (not in their own eyes only, but even in the judgement of discerning and sound Christians) living members of the household of Faith, shall notwithstanding relish and savour a Ministry calculated for the World, and accepted by it accordingly; hereby give testimony against themselves, that as yet they retain too much of the spirit of this World, to be fill'd, as they ought, with the Spirit of God, and of the World which is to come.

CONSIDERATION XVII.

Neither may it be unworthy our consideration in the case before us, that we read in the Scriptures, that unbelievers and persons destitute of the saving knowledge of God, did sometime come into the Religious Assemblies of the Saints, to partake of their Ministry, and were herein blameless: *1 Cor.* 14. 22, 23, 24, &c. but do not any where find that Believers were wont to fall into the Assemblies of Idolaters or Unbelievers, to receive instruction amongst them, or from their Priests, in things appertaining unto God and his Worship. Yea, the Apostle *Paul* adjudgeth it a practice altogether inconsistent with true Christianity, to eat and drink with false worshippers at their Idolatrous feasts, although it were done to escape persecution, *1 Cor.* 10. from ver. 13. to the end of ver. 23. And the sacred Author of the Epistle to the believing *Hebrews*, admonisheth and exhorteth them, thus; *And let us consider one another, to provoke unto love, and to good works; Not forsaking the assembling of OUR SELVES together, as the manner of some is, &c.* *Heb.* 10. 24, 25. He admonisheth Believers to assemble with Believers, and not to withdraw themselves from these, especially not to joyn or mingle themselves in the Assemblies of Idolaters or Unbelievers, as some degenerating spirits amongst them (it seems) did, out of fear of suffering persecution. For that these Christianiz'd *Hebrews* were in a sore form of persecution when this

this Epistle was written to them, and consequently, when they were charged *not to forsake the assembling of themselves together*, is evident from many passages in it: yea it is more generally conceived by the best Expositors, that the principal intent and scope of the Epistle was to support and comfort the *Hebrews* under their great afflictions for the Gospel, and to encourage them unto constancy and perseverance in their profession of it unto the end. So that feare of persecution is no *Christian* ground for those that desire to approve themselves faithful unto *Jesus Christ*, and the Gospel, to turn *Renegadoes* from the holy Assemblies of the Saints, in which, and over which, they formerly joyced, and to run to the tumultuous and disorderly conventions of carnal and prophane persons, as unto cities of refuge, hoping in these dark thickets to find covert and shelter from those stormes and tempests, which threaten those, who know God better, and feare him more, then to shrink from him for feare of men. And great reason there is, why Saints, who have been nourished with the sincere milk of the Gospel, bred, and brought up (as *Christians*) amongst their (*Spiritual*) Peers, in their Holy Assemblies, should not dare to quit these Schools of light and holiness, to become proselytes to the unhallowed and rude Synagogues of a politique and worldly constitution; because they seldome, or never, change their quarters upon these terms, but they doe it to their certain damage and great loss in their *Spiritual* estates, if not to the loss of their immortal crowns, themselves in the end. For when they have for any space of time, been influenced, and seasoned, by the *Prelatical* Ministry, which still superintends these Congregations, experience sheweth that they are *changed*, not from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord, but from glory to shame (*Imean*, from a *Christian* and humble frame and temper, unto that which is worldly, sowe and supercilious) as by the Spirit of the world, working effectually (for the most part) in the Children of a *Prelatical* Ordination. And as Country huswives observe that when any of their pulleyn, or hens have been trodden by Crows, upon this unnatural copulation, they lose their native shapes, become deformed, and seldom or never thrive, or recover after it: In like manner, when men and women, who under a *Christian* Education in the congregation of the Saints, were known to have been upright-hearted towards God, and good men, zealously addicted to the purity of Gods worship, haters of all superstition, and flesh-devised Ceremonies brought into this worship, lovers of the Saints, asserters of their liberties, promoters of their comforts, holy, humble, harmless, &c. when (I say) they shall forsake these assemblies, and go in to a *Prelatical*

istical Ministry, and converse familiarly with it, after a short time they are found to degenerate, and grow out of their kind, savouring of quite another spirit; now they become learned Pleaders for Baal, their consciences are enlarged to swallow Ceremonies of all sorts in the worship of God, as smoothly, and with as little regret, as fishes drink waters to approve of the Hierarchy in their usurpations, oppressions, and vexatious practises against the Saints, to cry up that Idol of Jealousie [the Common-Prayer-Book] in disparagement of the Heavenly gift of Prayer in the true Ministers of Christ, as those Idolatrous wretches (Act. 19. 28.) cried out (in a wrothful opposition to Paul's Doctrine concerning the true worship of the true God) Great is Diana of the Ephesians; they become alienated in their affections towards the Saints, chusing for their bosome converse, persons whom they judge most able, and willing withal, to justify them in their Apostacy, and to maintain the Prelatical cause, from the one end to the other, with greatest zeal and dexterity; they become self-willed, self-conceited, boasting of their knowledge, imputing it to the weakness and ignorance of all others, that they do not sacrifice at the same Altars with them, or that they scruple, question, or condemn any thing, which they allow and practise. In a word, these Crow-trodden professors, (let the Metaphor offend no man) by offering and suffering, their judgments and consciences to be ridden by a Prelatical Clergy, become in time, not only transform'd into an uncouth, strange, and hard favour'd kind of Christian, much unlike unto themselves, when, and whilest they consorted with the Sons and Daughters of God, and drank of the same waters of life with them; but (for the most part) so intoxicated also, besotted, and bewitched with their new wine, that they seldom, or never, recover that lovely image of God, wherein they formerly appeared, to the comfort and joy of many a precious Soul: For that which Solomon saith concerning the woman, which forsaketh the Guide of her youth, and forgetteth the covenant of her God; namely, that none that go unto her return again, Prov. 2. 17; 19. may be said of those that turn aside to a Babylonish Ministry: God in judgment, poureth out upon them the spirit of deep sleep, and closeth their eyes (Esa. 29. 10.) so that they hardly ever awake out of the snare until they dye.

CONSIDERATION XVIII.

Nor falleth it much short of a Demonstration of the Evil, or sinfulness, of that Way, from which, by many Arguments, we have

have dissuaded already; that so much secular violence hath been, and still is, employed to compel, and force all men into it. How did the Prelates heretofore, before the great mountain of their power and glory was removed by the late King and Parliament, turn every stone of tyranny, cruelty and oppression, to constrain both men and women to keep their Parish Churches? What troupes of Summoners, and Apparitors were levied up and down the Nation, to hunt out, and pursue, like Blood-hounds, all, both male and female, bond and free, whose Judgements were too full of Light, & their Consciences of Goodness, to drink of the waters of those polluted Cisterns, which they had hewn out, chusing rather (some of them) to worship God chastly and purely, even with *two or three gathered together in the name of Christ*; amongst whom he hath promised his presence (Mat. 18. 20.) although in such an attempt as this they exposed themselves to the danger of being, with *Daniel*, cast into the Lyons Den (I mean of being brought into their High Commission, or some of their *Antichristian* Consistories) many (I say) chusing this, rather than without any such danger, to communicate with the Parish Assemblies, either in their adulterous worship or idol ministry: and of late, since their deadly wound was (almost) healed, how have they, by their forceries, insinuated and prevailed with the Legislative Powers of the Nation, only to legitimate Ministers of their spurious brood and conformity, and to disinherit all others of their functions, as if they were basely descended, because they do not call them, *Fathers*; and not only this, but by several penalties also to restrain all assemblings of men for the Worship of God, and their *Christian* Edification, excepting only in consort with such Congregations, where they shall be necessitated to hear such Teachers only, who bring their office of teaching from under their hands? Thus doth the spirit of *Prelacy*, in conjunction with an arm of flesh, & with the powers of this world (instead of those of the world to come) labour in the very fire, to bring the whole trade of hearing to the shops of their journey-men, be their wares never so braided, sleight, or deceitful: and this verifieth the saying, *Superbia appetitum habet unitatis & omnipotentia*; i. e. The Pride of man greatly affecteth unity, and omnipotency. Now it can hardly be shewed, that ever the real interest of the Gospel, or true *Christianity*, endeavoured their advancement or promotion in the World, by threatening or inflicting secular punishments, as Fines, Consecutions, Imprisonments, Banishments, Deaths, or the like, upon those who refused to comply with them; but upon their service, and for their gaining upon the world; rather offered and exposed their own proselytes

and friends, upon all occasions, to the suffering of these things from the world : Whereas (on the contrary) it is well known that Idolatry, Superstition, and false Worships (almost in every kind) in all ages, for the enlargement of their quarters, and for encreasing the number of their Proselytes, have, according to their strength, *warred after the flesh* (in the Apostles phrase) and pleaded their cause with Fire and Sword, and all manner of outward severities, against those that refused compliance with them. By how authoritative, and bloody an Act of Uniformity, did King *Nebuchadnezzar* endeavour a universal concurrence of all within his vast Dominions, to joyn with him in his Idolatrous Worship of the Golden Image which he had set up? Then (all his Princes, and great Officers of State, being summoned together, and present) *an Herald cryed aloud, To you it is commanded, O People, Nations and Languages, That at what time ye hear the sound of the Cornet — ye fall down and worship the Golden Image, which Nebuchadnezzar the King hath set up. And who so falleth not down, and worshippeth, shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace, Dan. 3. 4, 5, 6.* And when only three persons in his Dominions, were accused as Nonconformists to this his Decree, with what fierceness of indignation doth he proceed against them? First, *In his rage and fury he commanded to bring them before him*: Being come, he himself examined them, or rather expostulated with them about the crime laid to their charge, as if it had been an high affront put upon him, or an undervaluing of his Majesty and Power. *Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego? Do ye not serve my gods, nor worship the Golden Image which I have set up?* Even as our Prelates, and great men of their Inspiration, count it an insufferable disparagement and reproach unto them, when persons of meaner rank in the World, judge it not safe, or well-pleasing unto God, to worship him after the same mode with them, as with the same Ceremonies, the same Gestures or Postures of body, in the same places and assemblies (the same, I mean, in nature or kind) and especially with the same Liturgies and forms of Prayer, when they shall authoritatively, solemnly, and with a borrowed visor of gravity and devotion, impose all this upon them. When the King having re-minded the said three Servants of God, of the tenour of his Decree, concerning the worshipping of his Golden Image, and threatened them with the heavy doom therein expressed, in case they should persist in their Nonconformity; after all this, understood that they nevertheless, without any demurre in the case, stood fast and firm in their resolution, not to comport with his Decree, in a great fury he commanded that the Furnace should be heated

heated seven times hotter than ordinary, and that the strongest men in his Army should bind these three persons, and cast them into it, *ver.* 13, 14, 15. &c. We may in this story, as in a glass, behold the spirit of Idolatry and Superstition, acting, like it self, in rage and blood, to compel, through dread and terror of outward sufferings, an universal subjection of all persons, to all the precepts and commands of it. In like manner, the *Beast that had two horns like a Lamb, but spake as a Dragon* [that is, that professeth the humility and meekness of *Christ*, the *Lamb of God*, but speaketh in his Bulls, and Excommunications of Kings and Princes, and whole Nations, like the *Great Red Dragon*, the *Devil*, who boasteth of a power, delivered and given unto him, to dispose of all the Kingdoms of the World as he pleased, *Luke* 4. 6.] this *Beast* (I say) according to that Heavenly Vision, wherein his practices and doings were long since revealed by *Christ* unto his beloved Disciple (*John*) causeth *ALL*, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive [from him, or by his command] a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: and that no man might buy, or sell, [and consequently, have any means of livelyhood, or subsistence, as far as he could hinder it] save he that had the Mark, or the Name of the *Beast* [meaning his own] or the number of his Name (*Rev.* 13. 16, 17.) that is (in the general; for we must not, at present, enquire after the particulars) save only such, who should give testimony, by one means or other, that they owned his Authority, and submitted their Consciences to his Faith and Religion. And *ver.* 15. it is said, that by his power he gave Life [or Spirit: the word is, *zōōn*] unto the Image of the *Beast* [that is, to his own Image; meaning, that what by means of his temporal, and what by means of his spiritual power, which he should get in the world, he would so animate and inspire his Image; that is, the System, or aggregate Body, of his Ecclesiastical Consistories, or Courts of Judicature in all places, which in their bloody proceedings and actions against the true Worship and Worshippers of God, resemble his *Countenance* and frame of Spirit, and may therefore be termed his Image] his body, or Image of his: saith *John*, He had power to give Life, that it should both speak, and cause [that is, to speak, as to cause] that as many as would not worship the Image of the *Beast*, [that is, reverentially own and acknowledge this his Jurisdiction and Power, as given unto him by God] should be killed. The other Interpretation of this passage given by some, maketh the result of it the same in reference to our present purpose: And the practices of the Papal Judicatures for many Ages past, in all places and Nations under Heaven, where the Authority and Faith of the triple Crown prevailed, give

give a pregnant and loud testimony to the truth contained in the Scriptures now cited; yea, and afford a clear light for the right understanding of them. It were no hard matter to exemplifie and confirm the observation now before us, by many more instances, as well from the Scripture-Records themselves, as from Histories of the best credit otherwise. So that it is a shrewd presumption, that a co-assembling with Parish-Congregations for the Worship of God, and the ordinary or constant hearing of a Prelatical Priesthood, have nothing of God in them, make not for edification in Faith and Love, in that they are so rigorously exacted, and under such severe penalties imposed upon all men by the greatness of this World, this being the accustomed, known, and appropriate method of Idolatry, Superstition, and humane Inventions, to maintain and propagate themselves, and their interest, in the World: Nor are they that ride upon the high places of the Earth, wont to be so zealously addicted or through-hearted, to promote the real concerns of Heaven, where they have to do. The reason why Christ shall not *deliver up the Kingdom*, which at present he administred, *unto God the Father*, until he hath put down all Rule, and his Authority and Power, is declared thus: *For he must reign, till he hath put all ENEMIES under his feet*, 1 Cor. 15. 24, 25. clearly implying that persons of high interest in the World, are seldom in any other sense, friends to the *Kingdom of Christ*, but only by opposing it: their enmity and opposition, to him [in his Saints and Worship] minister an occasion unto him, according to the projecture of the Wisdom and Counsel of God, to continue this Kingdom so much the longer in his hand; namely, until, in a most equitable and fair process of Justice and Judgment, and after much patience, and a large space given for Repentance, he shall abolish for ever their places of dignity and power from off the Earth.

CONSIDERATION XIX.

When God hath vouchsafed a sufficiency of means, and these unquestionably lawful, though not so rank of flesh, or so highly promising (upon such an account) as some others, for the attaining of any good and desirable end; as well a declining and forsaking of these means, (whether out of diffidence of the sufficiency of them for the end desired, or upon any other reason whatsoever) to espouse others that are more (carnally) flattering, and pretending to more strength and efficacy, but want the seal of Divine Approbation upon them; as the associating of means of this latter kind with those of the former, hoping

hoping by such a Conjunction as this, to pursue our desires with less danger of a defeat, or disappointment; I say, both the one and the other of these projections and practices have still been displeasing unto God, and of sad consequences unto those, that have been no better advised than to make trial of them. Examples of the truth of this observation the Scriptures afford many. When King *Abaz* would not rest satisfied with the strength of his own Kingdom, and men, by whom God had promised him protection & deliverance from the two Kings his neighbours, who combined in War against him, but judged it better policy to call in the King of *Assyria* to his assistance, contrary to the mind of God made known unto him by the Prophet, in these words, *Take heed, and BE QUIET* [that is, trouble not thy self in seeking after foreign help, from one place or other: It is much the same expression, and upon a like occasion, which we find, *Isa. 30. 7. Their strength, saith God, is to sit still*; meaning to depend upon him in the use of such means for their protection and safety, as they had at home, or he should direct them unto, and not to weary themselves, or waste their treasures, by sending abroad to court strange Princes for their aid] *Fear not, neither be faint-hearted, for the two tails of these smoking fire-brands, &c.* This King (I say) by this prudential course (as he supposed) for the preservation of himself and his Kingdom, provoked the just severity of God to the great misery of both, *Isa. 7. 4.* compared with *vers. 17, 18. &c.* and *2 Chron. 28. vers. 16, 19, 20.* For brevity sake, and partly because of the affinity with the subject matter of the 12th Consideration preceding, hath with the Argument of this in hand, and partly because the Observations asserted for Truths both in the one, and the other, are so agreeable to the Wisdom and Righteousness of God, as the Great Judge of all the Earth, we shall forbear to argue any more Texts of Scripture upon the service of what hath been laid down as the strength of our present Consideration, although there be very many more, which both in face and in heart, carry the substance and effect hereof, as (by name) *Isa. 8. 6, 7, 8. — 30. 1, 2, 3, 15, 16, 17. 2 Chron. 25. 6, 7, 8. Jer. 2. 36, 37. Ezek. 16. 26, 27, 28.* (with several others) I shall onely instance the case of those *Judaizing Christians* in the times of the Apostles, who to make all sure (as they thought) for their Justification before God, would needs joyn the righteousness or works of the Law, and more especially Circumcision, with the belief of the Gospel, or Faith in Christ for the obtaining of it. But through a carnal diffidence of the sufficiency of that way and means, which God hath sanctified for their justification, whilst they went about to supply the imaginary

ginary defect hereof with an additional means suggested by their own wisdom (or folly rather) unto them, they miserably miscarried in that so important a design, meeting with condemnation, instead of justification, from the hand of God : according to what the great Apostle plainly declared unto some of them : *Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised [namely with an opinion of obtaining justification, either in whole, or in part, by it] Christ shall profit you nothing. And again : Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified [that is, expect, or hope to be justified] by the Law, ye are fallen from Grace,* Gal. 5. 2, 4. Let us now bind the present Consideration, with what hath been proposed and argued in it, fast and close to our present purpose.

First, Certain it is that God hath provided, yet and at all times, or at least, ordinarily, even in times most threatening the sincere profession of the Gospel, affordeth unto his Saints, means both unquestionably lawful, and unquestionably sufficient, (if the Scripture may be Judge in the case) through his accustomed Grace and Blessing, for their Edification, Comfort, and Salvation.

Secondly, It is no less certain, that neither is a Prelatical Ministry, nor an attendance hereon, any means, authorized or approved by God, for the promoting or effecting of these ends. From hence according to the plain tenour of the premises laid down in this Consideration, it roundly follows, that either to decline and forsake the means vouchsafed unto us by God for our Edification and Salvation, to embrace others, or out of a conceit or pretence of an insufficiency or defectiveness in these means, for those ends to joyn others with them, which he hath not authorized, as (by name) the attendance upon a Prelatical Ministry (however specious or highly promising this means may be in our eye) is a policy or course, much more like to endamage and hinder us in those great concerns of our souls, than any ways to bless us in promoting them ; as it is said of *Tilgath Philnezer* King of *Assyria*, of whom *Abaz* King of *Judah* had desired aid against his enemies, that when he came unto him, *he distressed him, but strengthened him not* : Yea, it is added the second time, as a matter worth the minding ; that *he helped him not*, 2 Chron, 28. 20, 21.

Now that God affordeth unto his People sufficient means at all times for their spiritual Edification and Salvation, without the help of a Prelatical Ministry, might be proved at large from the Scriptures, if the case were doubtful enough to require it. But the more degrees of visibility there are in the Object, the fewer degrees of light will serve the visive faculty to discover it.

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First, The Scriptures themselves, diligently read, and with a good and honest heart searched into; are able to make us wise unto salvation, 2 Tim. 3. 15. And now, Brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance amongst all them which are sanctified, Acts 20. 32. But these [things] are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his Name, John 20. 31. These places also well understood, speak (with many others) the same thing. Luke 16, 29, 31. Psal. 119. 7, 8, &c. 2 Pet. 1. 19. John 5. 39. Rom. 15. 4. Heb. 4. 12.

Secondly, If any shall pretend, that the Scriptures, at least in many places, are obscure, and hard to be understood aright without a learned Interpreter; the answer is at hand: 1. The great variety of learned and profitable Expositions on all parts of the Scripture, wherewith the good providence of God hath enriched this Nation in their native tongue, in these our dayes, render such a pretence as this, in reference to the People of God amongst us, as light as vanity it self: Nor is it like that the present Ministry founded upon the Apocryphal Order of Prelacy, should be more Canonical or Orthodox, in giving out the mind of God in the Scriptures, than they. Not to mention the like variety of elaborate and solid discourses, (well nigh) upon all particular Subjects, or Heads of matter relating to Christian Religion. 2. It is a generally-acknowledged Truth, That in all things simply necessary unto Salvation, the Scriptures are plain, and the sence of them obvious to every ordinary understanding. 3. (and lastly, for this) The Judgments and Understandings of many, if not of most Christians, have in all ages been led aside from the mind of God in the Scriptures, (and this in things of very material consequence) by the false lights of such their Teachers, who were in great esteem for parts of learning, and knowledge in the Scriptures; in whom hath been verified that of the Prophet: *O my people, they which lead thee, cause thee to erre; they swallow (for so the Original) the way of thy paths* [meaning, that they do not stand much to consider what they teach thee, either to beleeve, or practise] Isa. 3. 12.—9. 16.

Thirdly, The Saints are able to build up one another in Faith, and Love: yea and are exhorted, or commanded, by God so to do: *But ye Beloved, building up your selves on [or, in] your most holy Faith, praying in the Holy Ghost; Keep your selves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord, &c.* Jude 20, 21. *Wherefore comforte your selves together, and edifie one another, even as ye also do,* 1 Thes. 5. 11. See also Eph. 4. 16. Col. 3. 16. Rom. 15. 14. Heb. 10. 24, 25. Jam. 5. 19, 20.

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Fourthly,

Fourthly, Even the smallest number of them, two, or three, meeting together upon such terms as they may at any time, and sometimes (at least) ought, may have the presence of *Christ* amongst them as oft as they desire; and consequently, need not be in any danger of mis-carrying in their important design of Salvation: *for where two, or three (saith Christ) are gathered together in my Name* [that is, either out of Conscience of my command in that behalf; or rather, out of any real trust, or hope, that they may have in God through me] *there am I in the midst of them* [meaning to bless them, and cause them to prosper in any holy business they shall meet about, the presence of God, or his being with, or amongst, any of his creatures, still importing such a thing, *Gen. 39. 2, 21, 23. Exod. 3. 12. Job. 1. 5. Mat. 28. 20. Deut. 7. 21. Job. 22. 31. and elsewhere, very often*] *Mat. 18. 20.* Now so small a number of Godly persons, as two, or three, may, with a little prudence and caution, even in the hardest, and worst of times, meet together in the name of *Christ*, without much danger from their enemies. If *Christ* had said, *where five, or six, are gathered together in my name, there, &c.* his presence amongst his Saints must have been sought for by them at their greater peril, and with more obnoxiousness (as it seems) to the Laws of men. So then the four means now mentioned (to which might be added, if need were, others more of a like character, as Prayer, Meditation, &c.) together with the use of them; are 1. Authorized by the Broad Seal of Heaven, being confessedly on all hands approved by God: and 2. (as hath been now shewed by the clear light of Divine Revelation) are sufficient by his ordinary blessing upon them, to build up the precious souls of the Saints in Faith and Love unto Salvation, at least when the great Benefit and Blessing of a *Christian* and worthy Ministry shall, by his providence, either operative, or permissive, be denied unto them. But

Secondly, Concerning a *Prelatical* Ministry, it is *terra filia*, a daughter of the earth, being the product, or fruit, of one kind of those *Tares*, which the enemy took his opportunity to sow in the field of God, *whilst men slept*, (*Mat. 13. 25.*) and hath no Communion with that Divine Politie of Church-Government, which the Gospel holdeth forth, and commendeth unto the *Christian* world; nor hath it been fed, or nourished, with the *sincere milk*, but with the blood of the Scriptures; whose genuine sence in all places arrested at the suit of it; hath been sacrificed upon the service of so mischievous an Idol. And inasmuch as it came not down from Heaven, it is not like, according to the course of Gods standing providence observed in the present *Consideration*, to help any of his Sons or Daughters thither, but rather

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to obstruct and hinder them in their way : especially it being withal considered, that they are otherwise provided of means sufficient, both for their present Comfort, and future Salvation in due time ; and then such, upon which the light of God's approbation shineth clear, yea, and which, as he hath prescribed them to use, so hath he promised to bless with the attainment of their end.

CONSIDERATION XX.

When any great storm or tempest of Persecution is raised against the sincere Profession of the Gospel ; and whilst it is incumbent hereon, so that the Saints cannot, with any liberty or freedom, meet openly in their holy Assemblies for the Worship of God, and their *Christians* Edification, but if they shall attempt it, they must do it at their peril, either of loss of their Liberties by Imprisonment, or of their Estates by Fines or Confiscations, or of their Country by Banishment, or of their Lives by Death : under these & such like exigencies, *Christ* is wont secretly to direct his faithful Ones unto more private opportunities, for their spiritual repast, and religious employments, that so they may be somewhat more out of the way of their enemies rage, and serve their God with the less fear of men : yet he is not wont to incline them, or to put it into their hearts to disband themselves, or break up their respective companies, and to become as Sheep scattered, every one feeding a-part by himself, and from all his fellows, but to assemble and keep together in such number as they shall find willing to accept of such opportunities, and judge convenient in point of safety, to assemble together. Yea, it is the *Genius* and Property of a soul devoted in Love and Loyalty unto *Christ*, earnestly by Prayer to seek directions from him in such hard seasons as we now speak of, whither to repair for its spiritual accommodations, and for his presence amongst his Saints. *Tell me (O thou, whom my soul loveth, saith the religiously engaged Soul, unto Christ, Cant. 1.7.) where thou feedest, where thou makest thy Flock to rest at noon* [that is, vouchsafe to direct me how and where I may partake of that soul-nourishment, and those spiritual refreshments, wherewith thou art wont to support and comfort thy Saints and People in their holy meetings at noon ; that is, in the heat of Persecution, as the best Interpreters do expound it.] From hence these two things are observable. 1. That *Christ* is not wont to feed his Sheep in times of persecution, where he usually feedeth them in dayes of liberty and peace : If this were so, there had been no occasion for the religious soul to have desired of him to know, where *He feed his Sheep at noon* (id.

the fence given) she knew well enough where he *fed* them in the cool and refreshing times of the day, as evening and morning; as, *viz.* in open places, where every man might know & come into their Assemblies; but in the heat and scorching time of the day, *at noon*, he still withdrew them into some more shady and retired place, where the danger or troublesome-ness of the heat might not interrupt them, whilst he should be feeding them. 2. It is further observable from the same words, that the soul-prudently *Christian*, and thoroughly apprehensive of her spiritual concerns, is not wont to rest satisfied with her closest Communion with *Christ*, or with his giving his loves unto her in private, but besides, and beyond this, longeth after those Communications of himself, wherewith he is wont to entertain his Friends (his Saints I mean) when they gather themselves in any number unto him; especially in times dangerous, and threatening unto those that shall thus assemble, his heart in these times being (usually) more enlarged, and his mouth wider opened, unto them, than ordinary; even as some men count it generous to feast their friends more sumptuously in the time of Lent, than at other seasons. The Soul which made the request unto *Christ* now opened, in the latter part of the verse giveth this reason of it; *For why should I be as one that turneth aside* [or rather, as the former Translation, with others, read it, *to, or unto*] *the flock of thy Companions.* By the *flock of Christ's Companions*, are meant (as some of the best Expositors that I have met with understand the words) the Congregations or Assemblies relating to, and depending on such Pastors who make themselves *Christ's Companions*, or Equals, by instituting new formes of divine Worship, as well as he (a). Others, not much differing from the former, by the *Companions of Christ* here, understand foreign or strange Shepherds, unrelated unto *Christ*, and having no Communion with him, but only in the appearance and appellation of a Shepherd (b). So that the reason why the religious Soul desireth of *Christ* to be directed unto his feedings in times of Persecution and danger, is, lest she might otherwise be tempted, and through weakness yeeld to fall in with such Assemblies, which have Ministers or Shepherds only so called, set over them, by whom she knew that He took no pleasure to feed any of his Sheep.

But that *Christ* (as hath been said) in tempestuous and foul weather, (when the spirit of the world rageth high against Church-meetings) is not wont to feed his Sheep in the champion, or open fields, where all men use to come, but to lead them into by-places, or solitudes, into inclosed grounds, narrow lanes of a long time dis-used, or un-occupied, under

) *Socius*
Christi vocat
intimos Pa-
stres, qui no-
calius,
ne ac Chri-
ipse, insti-
ment.
Shepherdman.
Sociorum
Christi, e. Pa-
trum extero-
qui nihil se-
rent, sed
in commu-
ni pecu-
nis specie,
appellatione,
in notis
locum

under hedg-rows, or the like, and to feed them here; the Scriptures inform us elsewhere. When *the Woman that brought forth the man-child*, was persecuted by the Dragon, there were given unto her two wings of a great Eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, *prepared for her of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred, and threescore days* [the whole time of her persecution] *Rev. 12. 6.* with 13, & 14. Therefore the Woman that brought forth the Man-child (that is, the successive body of Saints, or true Believers) during the times or reign of the Beast, is not spiritually fed and nourished in such Assemblies or Congregations which are publickly authorized, countenanced, or approved by the Beast, or by the World, which goeth *wondering after him* (Rev. 13. 3.) but in those which are retired, solitary and private, and which neither of them can well brook or bear, but that God hideth them. The Meetings of Christians for the exercise of their Religion, being hateful unto the *Jews*, and which they (it seems) would not have tolerated amongst them; had they had knowledge of them, without doing mischief, in one kind or other, to those that thereby should have provoked them: The Apostles themselves, by the guidance of the Spirit of God (for they were not, doubtless, led unto it by the wisdom of the flesh) the better to secure themselves from their rage when they assembled,

1. Made choice of a private house to meet in.
2. Of a private time, the *Evening*, yea, somewhat late in the Evening (as some collect from passages recorded, *Luke 24. 29. to vers. 36.*)
3. Of as much privacy in that private house, as they could well devise; for the doors of the room where they were, were shut: And in this posture of privacy, they did enjoy the blessed Presence of Christ. *Then the same day at Evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut, where the Disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus, and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you,* John 20. 19. We read of another meeting of *Christians* for the Worship of God, under all the same circumstances of privacy; and this, doubtless, upon the same account (I mean, *for fear of the Jews*) *Acts 12. vers. 6, 12, 13, 14.* compared: This meeting also had Christ in the midst of it (in the sense formerly declared) for by his Mediation and Interposure, their Prayers fetch'd Peter out of a strong Prison with an high hand. So again, we read of another religious Meeting of the Apostles, together with a considerable number of other *Christians*, in an upper room, for the greater privacy and security, comers and goers being oft upon occasion, and for civility sake, brought into one, or more of the lower rooms of an house, when there is no occasion of their going or carrying up

up into the higher. Besides, a continual voice may much more easily be heard, and estimated, by those that only pass by an house out of a low room, then from an high; this being more remote, and from whence, though the sound of a voice may (possibly) be sometimes heard below, yet the articulateness of it, being confin'd to a narrower Sphere, expireth and is lost by the way. And though Dr. Hammond labourerh in the very fire (as his manner is when any thing occurs him in his way, that seems to frown upon *Episcopacy*) to prove, that the upper room here spoken of, was not any room in a private house, but one of the upper Chambers of the Temple: yet he hath so much of a man in him (I mean of Ingenuity, whereof when a man suffers himself to be dispoyled, he is only a man so called) as to acknowledge (and this twice over, for failing) that *Christians* here met, did that more privately, which could not, we may presume, be done in the Temple [he might have added, nor in any Synagogue] in any more publick place, the *Christian Religion* being not much favoured, that is, bitterly hated by the Jews; [even as the Religious Worship of the true Saints of God amongst us, is not much favoured by those, that say they are Jews, and are not (in the sence of these words, *Rev.* 2. 9.)] And what the Doctour here granteth; namely, that believing *Christians* kept their holy Assemblies by, and amongst themselves, privately, for fear of disturbance, or mischief (in one kind or other) from those, that hated their way and manner of serving God, maketh as much for our purpose, as if the *Upper room*, which he so wearierh himself to find in the Temple, should prove to have been in a private house. But whether the word here translated an *Upper room*, signifieth in this place, an upper Chamber in the Temple, or no; certain I am, that *Acts* 20. 8. it signifieth an upper Chamber in a private house (or at least, in an house commonly and properly so called) where also we find another private Meeting of *Christians*, and *Christ* (in the sence we wot of) in the midst of them: Elsewhere it signifieth (and this twice together, as *Acts* 9. 37. & 39.) an upper Chamber in a private house; but no where, at least in the New Testament, an upper Chamber in the Temple. But this by the way.

From the tenour and contents of the present Consideration, it clearly appeareth, that in times of trouble, when the Saints are not permitted, but under great dangers or penalties, to assemble themselves together for their holy occasions openly, *Christ* is not wont to bless them, or do any great things for them in such promiscuous Congregations, which are of a worldly complexion and constitution, as well Priest as People, and which, upon this account, are publicly countenanced and rejoyced

red in ; but his manner and good pleasure hath been, in such hard seasons as these, to allure them into the Wilderness, and there to speak kindly and graciously unto them ; or to gather them together under his wings privately, as a hen gathereth her chickens, and so to communicate his heavenly warmth and vivifick influence unto them.

CONSIDERATION XXI.

They that keep the Word of Christ's Patience, shall be kept by him from the hour of temptation, which will come upon others to try them ; (*Rev. 3. 10.*) whereas they deprive themselves of the benefit and blessing of this precious Promise, who shall betray, forsake, or decline this Word. By the *Word of Christ's Patience*, though it be with some difference, yet not great neither, understood, may (with greatest probability, as I conceive) be meant, any Gospel-Truth, which is opposed with a strong and high hand, in the place where we live, and can hardly be owned and professed without suffering, or at least, without danger of suffering in one degree or other : Such a Truth as this, may be called, *The Word of Christ's Patience*, because he is the occasion, by his charge upon men in that behalf, why any man suffers for the profession and defence of it at any time : (or more briefly) because it is for his sake that any man, in any case whatsoever, suffereth for it. In a State or Nation professedly *Pagan*, and where *Christianity*, upon what terms soever professed, is a reproach unto those that profess it, or matter of deeper inconvenience, the whole Gospel or Doctrine hereof in general, is, and may be called, *The Word of Christ's Patience*. In Kingdoms or States, professing *Christianity*, the Doctrine of the Gospel in general, is never this Word, because every man here may profess that he believeth this Doctrine in general, without exposing himself to any danger of suffering. But the *Word of Christ's Patience* in such Communities of men as these, is alwayes some particular considerable and weighty Truth of the Gospel, one or more, which either plainly and in express words, or else constructively and by clear consequence, whether in opinion or practice, or both, is denied or opposed, either by the Ruling Powers, or by the Ministers, and others reputed Learned and Orthodox, or by the generality of the People here : So that whoever shall keep this Word, that is, shall discover himself to own such a Truth, or shall upon occasion openly plead the cause of it, renders himself hereby obnoxious unto the hatred and ill-will of the one and the other, and consequently unto all such sufferings, both for nature and degree, which they shall think meet, and please to inflict upon

upon him (God permitting them so to do ;) as on the contrary they may be said to let go, sell, or betray such a Truth, and give it up, as an Error, into the hand of the enemy, who being convinced in their consciences that it is a Word or Truth of Christ, shall notwithstanding, either dissemble, or deny it, when they ought and are called to give testimony unto it, or shall comply with the Adversaries in their opposition to it.

Now concerning the Promise made by *Christ*, unto those that shall *keep the Word of his Patience* (in the sense given) by being *kept by him from the hour of temptation, which will come* [or, may come at one time or other] upon the generality of Christians, *to try them* [thoroughly, or with the greatest and forest tryal of all] is meant. That when other Professors of the Gospel shall, in many places, be tryed with a bloody persecution, whereby they will be brought to this sad exigent, either to waste their consciences by denying some manifest Truth, or else either to lay down their lives, or to undergo somewhat that will be bitter in the next degree to it ; they shall be kept or preserved from that storm. So that this is the Rule of Equity, by which *Christ* declares that he will walk towards those that profess his Name and Gospel ; They that shall shew themselves loyal & faithful unto him in owning any of his *Words*, when they are opposed, although their faithfulness in this kind shal expose them unto, or bring upon them, lighter sufferings only, and, which are more easie to be born, shall notwithstanding, upon the account of such their faithfulness, be excused or exempted by him from greater tryals, and which are unto blood: whereas those that shall faulter with him, and turn their backs upon any of his *Words* or *Truths*, when the danger of owning them is but little (comparatively) shall be in danger of being exposed and left by him unto temptations that are most fiery and grievous, and exceeding difficult to be resisted. Let us now apply the consideration of these things to the business in hand.

One of the *Words of Christs Patience* amongst us at this day (and which, for weight and moment, hath the preheminance amongst some others that may passe under the same denomination) is, That *Christ is not onely the Sovereign, or Supream, but the sole and onely Law-giver unto his Church and People, in matters appertaining to the Worship of God*. Whether the open asserting and maintaining of this Truth in the terms now expressed, and no further, or otherwise, will create danger or trouble unto any person amongst us, or no; I cannot asseigne: But certain I am, that both an oral and practical maintaining of it, in the right sense and import of the said words, is

of

of a threatening concernment amongst us. For if the legislative authority in matters of Divine worship, and things requisite, and necessary, at all times, and in all places, hereunto, be vested in Christ alone, then they that shall keep, own, and give testimony unto, this word, must not consent unto, or comply with, either in word, or deed, any model or form of praying, any ceremony, one, or more, in, or about the worship of God; any Church-office for the regulating and ordering of this worship, which Christ himself hath not prescribed, ordered, and appointed, but are introduced, imposed, and commanded, under mulcts, and penalties, by humane power and authority only. For any thing by command made necessary in, or for, the worship and service of God, and without which men are not permitted (but at their peril) to worship him, hereby becomes essential to this worship, and so somewhat, and a part, of it. Those circumstances, which God commanded in relation to any main part of his worship under the Law, though they were, in themselves considered, things indifferent, as that the beast to be sacrificed should be *killed on the side of the Altar Northward*, *Levit. 1. 11.* that the crop and feathers of the fowles sacrificed should be *cast besides the Altar on the East part*, *ver. 16.* That the Priest should dip his finger in the blood of the Bullock offered, and sprinkle it *seven times before the vails, and put some of it upon the horns of the Altar*, *Levit. 4. 17, 18.* All these circumstances (May) with many others of like consideration, however indifferent in themselves, yet being commanded by God with reference to his worship, and so that this could not be performed, regularly and with acceptance, without the observance of them, hereby became parts of his worship. From whence (by the way) it is observable likewise, that for men to claim an authority, or right of power, to make indifferent things necessary, in, for, or about, the worship of God, is to make themselves equal in authority (at least in matters of this high and sacred concernment) with God himself; and consequently, to deny Jesus Christ to be the sole Law-giver unto his Church in things appertaining to the worship of God. And as under the Law, God himself commanded all indifferent things in, and about, his worship, which were in any respect commodious, or comely in it, or for it, judging all other indifferent things, which he left un-commanded in this case, to be as necessary and fitting to be thus left (I mean, un-commanded); in like manner it argueth very unworthy (that I say not, blasphemous) thoughts of Christ in any man, to question, either, 1. Whether he perfectly knew what indifferent things were necessary, or in any respect, or degree, would be comely in the worship of God under the Gospel;

or 2. Whether he neglected to prescribe by himself, or (which signifieth the same) by his Apostles, all such particular things; which he knew to be any wayes needful, or meet, in this worship, judging it better to betrust the wisdom and wills of men with the enjoyning of them, or (at least) of some of them, then his own; or 3. (and lastly) Whether he did not well know, that it was better, and more conducing, both to the glory of God, and to the benefit and comfort of his Church and people, that such indifferent things, as he left free, and un-commanded, should remain so still, and that his counsel in that behalf, should not be defeated, or made void by men; who now by their impositions of such things, which Christ would not impose, deal between him, and his people, much alike as Gehazi did between his Master Elisha, and Naaman the Syrian: Behold (saith this unworthy servant) *My Master hath spared Naaman this Syrian, in not receiving at his hands that which he brought: But, as the Lord liveth, I will run after him, and take somewhat of him:* And being as good (or rather, as bad) as his word, he undetermined, and disannulled, through his base covetousness, the honourable intention of his worthy Master, which was, that Naaman's cure should cost him nothing, 2 King. 5. So do they who Distrepper-like, affect a preeminence, and power in, and over, the Churches of God, which are incompetent to them, (in effect) say: Our Master Christ spared his Church and people, and was over-indulgent to them in matters appertaining to the worship of God, left them at great liberty, imposing few external observances upon them herein, and those easie; but *as the Lord liveth*, our little finger shall be thicker, or heavier, unto them, than his loynes, we will enslave them, and set task-masters over them, Vicars-Generall, Chancellours, Arch-Deacons, Officials, Commissaries, Apparitors, (who shall spoil both for themselves and for us) Church-wardens, Sides-men, Parish-Priests, Parish-Clarks, (all, either Apostolical, or Apocryphal, Officers in the Church;) Moreover we will lay a load of Ceremonies and Observations upon them, we will compel them to worship and serve God with the same Liturgies, Letanies, Collects, and other devices, wherewith we are content to worship him; to hear, where, and whom we shall appoint them to hear; we will make them pray, when we say, pray; bow, when we say, bow; kneel, when we say kneel; stand up, when we say, stand up; be uncovered, when we say, be uncovered; swear, when we say, swear; inform, when we say, inform: In a word, we will rule them with a rod of iron, and break them in pieces like a Potters vessel, if we find them refractory and disobedient.

disobedient unto us, and not to do all things that we command them. Doubtless those men, in whom such a spirit as this worketh effectually, do not in good earnest, and with the whole heart, acknowledge *Jesus Christ* to be the Sole Law-giver unto his Church and People. For where he imposeth one Law or Observation upon them, concerning the Worship and Service of God, they impose ten (if not a greater number than so); thus through their pride, and lust of domineering, utterly defeating and defeating the gracious intendment of *Christ* towards them, which (as was lately said) was to make the yoke of the Worship of God, in respect of the external part of it, exceeding easie and leight, and to leave it free and dis-incumbred, as from the rudiments of the world, so from the Traditions, Ritual Injunctions, and Impositions of men. Therefore they who any wayes countenance or comply with, these men in their clame, or exercise of such a power, in or over any of the Churches of *Christ*, or shall submit unto any of their Injunctions issued forth, and imposed, under a pretence, or by vertue of this power, do not keep, but give up, and betray that *word of Christs patience*, which asserteth unto him the Sole Legislative power over all his Churches, (as hath been declared) and consequently, lay themselves open and naked unto farre more grievous and formidable temptations, which sooner or later they are like to fall into, if not to fall under. For the promise of being kept by *Christ* from such temptations as these, is (as we have heard) made onely unto those, who have kept the *word of his patience*, [meaning, when the danger of keeping it was less, and the temptation to forsake or betray it, more easie to be resisted, and to stand upright under]. I shall not need (I suppose) further to add, that they who do homage with their attendance and dependance upon that Ministry, which is pretended to be erected in the Church, and upheld by the power which magnifieth it self against the Prerogative of *Christ* in his power over his Churches, do most notoriously and palpably betray that *word of his patience*, which asserteth this his Prerogative unto him (the erecting of a Ministry, being one of the most daring, insolent, and Heaven-affronting actings of that usurped power), and so for fear of being beaten with Rods, take a direct course to be scourged with Scorpions.

These are some of those important considerations, which being thoroughly digested in the Judgments and Consciences of good *Christians*, cannot (leightly) but so affect them, as to cause them to distast the practice of hearing a Prelatical Ministry. I could have entreated the number of them with some others, which (haply) might have done as good execution upon the Judgments of some, as any of them. But I

am earnestly perswaded that God will ere long raise up a better workman, who by his direction and assistance, shall hammer this nail to more purpose, then hath yet been done. In the mean time, because error, and sin, have their glosses and colours, as well as Truth and Righteousness, their weight and substance; let us briefly survey some of the fairest Pretexes, wherewith the practice hitherto censured, and dissuaded from, may (probably) hope, yea (possibly) be confident, that she is able to justifie her self. Cities and Castles, that have been long built, and were never yet attempted, at least never conquered, either by siege or assault, are like to impute their freedom in this kind, and long continued safety, unto their own strength. The Arguments then, whereby the practice condemned in the premises, seems most defensible, are these following: And verily I shall acknowledge my self a Debtor, as for a signal courtesie, unto him that shall either mend, or improve these my Arguments, or offer me others of more strength.

Argument I.

Our Saviour Christ, to the multitude, and to his Disciples, saith thus: *The Scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses seat: All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do: but &c.* Mat. 23. 1. 2. 3. If it were lawful, yea matter of duty, (for so the command, or charge of Christ maketh it) for them to observe and do whatsoever the Scribes and Pharisees taught them according to Moses's Law, then is it lawful and no less matter of duty, for Christians to observe and do, whatsoever Prelatical Ministers teach them according to the Gospel: For these are not, at least many of them are not, a more unworthy Generation of men then they: And if they stand bound to do whatsoever they thus teach, they stand bound to hear them when they teach, at least they may lawfully hear them.

Answer.

1. The reason why Ministers of a Prelatical Edition ought not to be heard in their publick teachings, is not because they are a Generation of men more wicked and vile then the Scribes and Pharisees were, but because their delinquency is such, and so unhappily conditioned, that we cannot wait upon them in their Ministerial employments, without being partakers with them therein: and we stand expressly charged by God not to be partakers of other mens sins, 1 Tim. 5. 22. Eph. 5. 11.

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(with many other places). For deriving, and accepting, their Ministerial Function from an *Anti-christian* Power (I mean, such a Power, which exalteth itself against, and in many things, above the power of *Jesus Christ*, acted and exercised by him, in and over his Churches, as was shewed in the last Consideration) in and by every exercise and administration of this their Function, they avouch and justify that so highly-sacrilegious an Usurpation: and they who countenance them with their presence, whilst they act this great unworthiness, do nothing less, then justify such their justification, and so must needs share with them in the iniquity of it. Whereas the *Scribes and Pharisees*, of whom our Saviour speaks in the Text before us, according to Dr. Hamand's own Paraphrase of the place, were of the *Sanhedrim*, and to be looked upon by them [the people, and his Disciples themselves] as their lawful Rulers that had Authority over them, succeeding *Moses and the seventy Elders*, Numb. 11. 16. According to this notion (which is not altogether improbable) there was no reasonable ground of any scruple about hearing them, when they expounded and declared *Moses* his Law. And if it could be proved on the behalf of the Ministers, whom we judge unlawful to hear in their Teachings, that they in any such sense, sit in the Seat, either of the *Apostles*, *Prophets*, *Evangelists*, *Pastors*, or *Teachers*, which *Christ*, when he ascended up on high, gave for the perfecting of the *Saints*, &c. neither should we question the lawfulness, yea or duty (upon occasion) of hearing them. But the conjecture of *Grotius* seems more rational, and better comporting with the Scriptures; which is this, That the *Jews* had no Consistory of Tryers, upon any person or persons, publicly authorized among them, to examine, or take account who were meet, or fit to be allowed for expounders of the Law; but that it was free for any man, whose heart served him for the work, or take it upon him, and to instruct and teach the people accordingly: only adding, that more generally, they who did take this profession or work upon them, were *Pharisaic* institutions, of the Sect or persuasion of the *Pharisees*: As (saith he) among the *Romans*, it was permitted unto any man that would, to plead any man's Case at any Bar of Judicature in their State: That which we read, Acts 13. 15. favours the said conjecture: And after the reading of the Law and the Prophets, the Rulers of the Synagogue sent unto them, saying, ye Men and Brethren, if ye have any word of Exhortation for the people, say on: which seems to imply, that any person amongst them, might without breach of any order or custome, teach the people publicly out of the Law and Prophets. If it were thus, neither could there be any the like reason for the *Jewish* people to deny their attendance

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dance upon the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* in their teachings of the Law, which, according to the premises, there is, why *Christian* people should separate themselves from Priests of the *Prelatical* Union in their preachings of the Gospel. These pollute themselves by polluting the most Sacred and Blessed Name of *Jesus Christ*, in accepting their Office, or Power of Preaching, upon the terms they do, whereby they become *irregular* for this employment; whereas the other, supposing them of competent abilities for the work, committed no offence, offered no indignity unto God, in accepting, or entering upon it.

Argument II.

The Apostle *Paul* rejoiced, yea, and professed that he would rejoice, that *Christ* was Preached every way, whether in pretence or in truth, Phil. 1. 18. Therefore certainly it is lawful, yea, and more than lawful (even matter of duty, upon occasion) to hear such (at least) of the *Prelatical* Teachers, who preach *Christ*, which it seems hard to deny but that some of them do. For such preaching, which no man can hear without sin, cannot be any just matter of rejoicing unto a *Christian*, nor (indeed) unto any man.

Answer.

1. This general expression, *every way*, is to be limited and understood; according to the Subject matter in hand. There is nothing more frequent in the Scriptures than to deliver that in general terms, which yet admits, not of a simple, or absolute universality in the meaning of it, but only of such, which renders it consistent with the tenor and notion of other Scriptures, and is (for the most part) commensurable to the present occasion, *Matth.* 23. 3. *Mark* 1. 5. -- 11. 24. *Luke* 2. 1. 10. -- 6. 30. *John* 10. 8. *Acts* 5. 42. *Rom.* 1. 5. (to omit other instances without number). Besides, it is a common and true Rule, *Prædicata sunt talia, qualia à subjectis suis esse permittuntur*: In Propositions, the sense of one part is to be regulated by, and accommodated into the sense and import of the other. So then the Apostles meaning (in the words before us) is not that the preaching of *Christ*, or that which may (in a sense) be called, the preaching of *Christ*, in what way, or upon what terms, or by what persons soever, it should, or could be performed, would be matter of rejoicing: Such a sense as this (besides that the words no wayes necessitate unto it, but rather lead

lead aside from it, as may be shewed presently) is inconsistent with what we find in the Scripture elsewhere. For when the Devil preached *Christ*, affirming, upon his knowledge, that he was *The Holy One of God*, Mark 1. 24. Luke 4. 34. And again, that he was *Christ the Son of God*, vers. 41. The Lord *Christ* was so far from rejoicing in being thus preached, that he rebuked the Preacher, and commanded him to hold his peace, Luke 4. 35. 41. Mark 1. 25. Thus the Devil that followed *Paul* and those with him, crying out, and saying, concerning them, *These men are the Servants of the Most High God, which shew unto us the way of Salvation*, did, in effect, and after a sort, preach *Christ*, by giving testimony unto those, who did truly preach him; yet *Paul* rejoiced not in this her preaching of him, but on the contrary, was grieved at it (as is expressly said, Acts 16. 18.) They also preached *Christ*, who preached Justification and Salvation by him, though not by him alone, but in Conjunction with Circumcision, and the works of the Law; yet neither did *Paul* rejoice in his being preached in such a manner, or upon such terms, Acts 15. 1. Gal. 5. 2. 4. Phil. 3. 2. Gal. 5. 12, compared. Nor is it like that he would have much rejoiced in his being preached by such persons, of whom he prophesieth, Acts 20. 29. *Grievous Wolves---not sparing the Flock.* Amongst other Characters of persons, of whom God himself demandeth *What have you to do to declare my Statutes, or that you should take my Covenant into your mouth*, this is one; *that when they saw a Thief, they consented with him*, Psal. 50. 16, 18. which in a very Emphatical sense, is said of those Preachers, whom we judge it unbecoming a good Christian to hear. For in accepting their Office of a Ministry from the Hierarchical Lords, they consent with them in their sacrilegious robbing the Lord *Jesus Christ* of that Authority and Honour, which God hath judged meet to confer upon him, in anointing and appointing him to be the Sole Lawgiver unto his Churches in things appertaining to the Worship and Service of God, as well in things to be practised, as in things to be believed. But of this we have spoken formerly. By what hath been said to the Argument in hand, it is sufficiently evident, that the Apostle's general expression concerning *Christ's* being preached every way, is to be understood with limitation; and consequently, that no Argument, or Proof for any thing, can be drawn from the generality of it.

2. In propriety and strictness of speaking, *Christ* cannot be said to be preached by a Prelatical Ministry. For only then he may be properly said to be preached, when he is preached, and set forth, like unto him-

himself, without any diminution, impairment, or diminishing of his glory: and if any person be preached under the name of *Christ*, unto whom any part of that glory is denied by those who preach him, in, or by, their act of preaching him, which is appropriate unto the true *Christ*, the *Christ of God*, it is not this *Christ*, but another, an *Idol Christ*, that is preached. Now the Ministers we speak of, in, and by, their very act, or deed, of preaching, justify those, who both in words, but especially in deeds, deny the true *Christ* to be the Sole Lawgiver unto his Churches (as hath been proved) which yet is one of the richest, and most illustrious and shining Gems in that Crown of Glory, which God the Father hath set upon his head: and whilst they preach such a *Christ* as this (a *Christ* who hath no such Prerogative, or Royalty, belonging to him, as a Sole power of Legislation unto his Churches, but hath weak and sinful men joynt-sharers with him in his Authority in this kind) do not preach the true, the real *Christ*, the *Christ of God* (as Peter termeth him, *Luke 9. 20.*) but a *Christ* formed in their own imaginations, & having no existence but here only, and in the fancies of their Professors, and is not able to justify men from their sins, nor to save their souls, though (it is like) they ascribe these great things unto him, as Idolaters in all Ages have been wont, to attribute the great works of God unto their Idols. And as *Christ* is said to *APPEAR* in Heaven for us, (*Heb. 9. 24.*) meaning, that his very appearance before God, considering what he hath done, and suffered on our behalf, is, without any other expression, or application of himself unto him, as by oral request, prostration, or the like, a most effectual interceding with him for us: In like manner the Sole appearance of a Prelatical Minister in the Pulpit to perform the act of preaching, it being known and considered, how, and by what, for whose, Authority, he appears upon such an account here, is an interceding, or pleading, with all that are before him, for that *Antichristian* and lawless power, which is blasphemously claim'd, and exercised, by the great Masters of the Hierarchy, and consequently, against that Most Sacred Prerogative of *Christ*, which giveth him the honour of being the Sole Lawgiver unto his Churches. And as the Apostle speaketh of some, *Who* [in words] *profess that they know God, but in works they deny him,* (*Tit. 1. 16.*) So in case such a Minister as this, should in his Doctrine, or Sermon, affirm *Jesus Christ* to be the Sole Lawgiver unto his Churches, yet in, and by, his very act of preaching he should deny it.

9. (and lastly) This distribution, *Whether in pretence, or in truth,* plainly sheweth, that the Apostle in his general expression of *Christ's* being

being preached every way, intended only these two; his being preached, either *in appearance, in pretence* [or, as some render it, occasionally] or, in truth. Now *Christ* may be said to be preached, *in appearance, in pretence*, when they who preach him, are acted and moved hereunto by indirect and unworthy ends, and yet would be thought to preach him *in truth*, [that is, out of a sincere and upright intention, and desire, to serve God, and man in the work.] And inasmuch as they who preach *Christ* out of sinister and by-ends, may nevertheless be free from Scandal, and from the guilt of any such known Act, or Practise, whereby *Christ* is denied in any of the Divine Royalties appropriate to his Kingly Office, or annexed to his Mediatory Throne, their preaching of *Christ*, if it be according to the true tenor and purport of the Gospel (as it may be, and as it seems, theirs was, by whom *Paul* supposeth he was preached in pretence) in respect of the Glory that may hereby redound unto God, and the benefit that may accrue unto men, is just matter of rejoicing unto a sober and considerate Christian: yea, though it should be revealed unto him by God (as it was unto *Paul* in the case before us) that such a man's aims or ends in preaching, are not honourable, or Christian. But this maketh nothing for the countenancing of their preaching him, who openly consent unto, and are considerate with, those, who devalue him of his Glory; yea, and are publicly known to divide the spoyl with them.

Argument III.

Yea but some of those Ministers, whom you would make it unlawful for us to hear, are holy and good men, of exemplary lives and conversations, sober, temperate, just, full of good works, given to hospitality, charitable to the poor, &c. It seems an hard saying unto us, that it should not be lawful for us to hear such men as these, at least if in their preaching of the Gospel, they turn neither to the right hand, nor to the left, but keep close all along to the counsel and mind of God therein.

Answer.

1. I verily believe, and this upon terms better pleasing unto those, with whom we are in contest, than of meer Christian Charity, that there have been more than a few of those, who have accepted their Office of Ministry from the irregular hand of Prelacy, of that Christian and worthy Character specified in the Argument, viz. *holy and good, of exemplary lives, &c.* Yea, I am not without hope, but that there may be

be amongst us at this day a remnant of the same Generation, who are found at the heart, and love *Jesus Christ* in sincerity, who (setting aside their compliance with Prelatical usurpations and Superstitions, the great evil whereof may not as yet be arrived at their judgments) are Christianly Orthodox, both in their Lives and Doctrines: Nay, I doubt not but that the Prelatical Order it self hath, by its enchantments, tempted many of the true friends and faithful Servants of God, into the embracements of it. But,

2. Our *English Proverb*, which remindeth us, that *All is not Gold, that glistereth*, may a little qualifie our credulity, without making any breach upon our Charity, in the case in hand; considering that the great Apostle himself, in reference hereunto, speaketh as much (if not much more) where he informeth us, as of a Secret, that it is no great thing [that is, no wonderful, or rare thing, as the word, *great*, often significeth in the Scriptures] if the Ministers of Satan be transformed as the Ministers of Righteousness, himself being transformed into an Angel of Light: Yea, he had spoken immediately before of certain false Apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the Apostles of Christ, 2 Cor. 11. 13, 14. So that men may be false Apostles, Ministers of Satan, and deceitful workers, [that is, may, in the course of their Ministry, slyly, and subtilly, drive on some Un-Christian and Satanical design, dangerous to the Souls of those that hear them] and yet, both in their lives, and in the ordinary and general current of their Preaching, outwardly appear so like unto Ministers of Righteousness, and of Christ [for they must artificially resemble them in both, to compleat their transformation] that it will be a very hard matter, till after some considerable space of time, and without much narrow observation, to detect and discover them. And it is much to be feared, that many of those now amongst us, whom we have ground, both from their lives, and ordinary teachings, to judge persons of Christian worth and integrity in that way, will sooner, or later, betray themselves not to be the men in heart, which for a time they were in face. For some, who are wont to quit themselves like Angels of Light in their usual, and more frequent preachings, being persons also sober and grave in all that is visible in their Conversations, yet upon some occasions, and for the most part, in their Sermons on dayes of Publick Humiliations, or Thanksgivings, and sometimes in their Funeral Discourses, are prevented by their proper and true Genius; so that the cloven foot now appears.

Amongst

Amongst the Authorized Teachers of the *Koiné* Faith, and Religion, Priests and Jesuits, there are some (and haply a larger proportion) no wayes behind, if not before, the best approved of our *Prelatical* Ministers, for any thing singular, either in their Lives, or ordinary Teachings. Therefore if we judge it not safe, or well-pleasing unto God, constantly, or ordinarily, to seek our edification on things appertaining unto God, and to our eternal Salvation, at the lips of these men, in their ordinary, or select course of Teaching, why should we not be as conscientious and tender to seek it upon such terms at the mouths of those amongst us, whom our *Prelatical* Lords are pleased to send forth, and appoint for the same great ends, and services unto us? For (dondeless) as well the latter, as the former, are in the great condemnation of supporting an *Antichristian* Interest and Power, and this even by that which is commendable, and pleasing unto men; either good, or bad; both in their Lives, and in their Doctrine: and consequently go hand in hand in promoting such a design, which counterworks the holy project and design of *Jesus Christ*, which is, that his Saints may *serve him without fear* [as well of sufferings from men, as from God] *in holiness and righteousness before him all the dayes of their lives*, Luke 1. 74, 75. And it hath been seldome, or never known, that any great community, body, or party of men in the World, have long subsisted (at least upon any competent terms of credit, peace, or safety) but by means of some few of their Members (respectively) who by their wisdom & worth above their fellows, have been as pillars to bear up their several Politicks, or Parties, and keep them from sinking; as *Paul* speaking of *James*, *Cephas*, and *John*, saith, they seemed [or, were counted, as our former translation had it] pillars, (meaning, to support the Christian Interest in the world.) As though there be some thousands of Laths, and many slight pieces for partitions; and otherwise, in a building, yet those few Substantial and main pieces of sound Tymber, unto which the Architect coupleth and fastneth the rest of his work, are they which give strength unto the house, and make it able to endure, and stand, all winds and weather. So that when God (whether out of his wisdom, for the tryal of those, who profess his Name, or out of Judgment, to punish their unworthiness, or upon what other account soever, whether known, or unknown, unto us) pleaseth to give way unto Satan, by his subtile and plausible insinuations and suggestions, so far to camper with the hearts and spirits of some Professors of the Gospel, as between them, to raise up, and set on foot, and for any considerable Tract of time to maintain and keep on foot,

a corrupt Interest under some Religious pretence (one, or more) in the Christian world; he is pleased likewise to suffer the plausible pleas, and pretences of this Interest, together with the large portion of worldly accommodations which it promiseth unto those, that shall espouse it, so to dazzle and blind the eyes of the reasons, judgements, and consciences of some wise, learned, and good men all along the continuance of it, that they shall not see the evil of it, nor yet be convinced hereof by those who do see it most clearly, but shall cleave fast and close unto it, and stand up in their might to justify and plead the cause of it. It is said that the eyes of the two Disciples travelling to *Emmaus*, *in the night* (*Luke 24. 16.*) were mightily, or powerfully held; by reason whereof they did not know the Lord *Christ*, though present with them in his proper countenance and face; with which they were so familiarly acquainted: only (as it seems by what *Mark* affirmeth, *Chap. 16. 12.*) he was somewhat disguised in his apparel; yet all this while their eyes were as open to see and discern all other objects, but onely the face of *Christ*, as at other times. In like manner the eyes of the minds and understandings even of men piously learned and grave, may, upon Gods withholding his wonted concurrence with them in reference to the discerning of such, and such particular Truths, be so deluded, captivated, and bewitched with the false colours and appearances of truth in the contrary-errors, that they will without fear, or scruple, embrace these, yea and with an high hand of confidence and importunity, rise up to justify and maintain them: when as they may all this while approve themselves for men of an exact judgement, and discerning spirit between truth and error, in other cases. Men of this Character, or (at least) seemingly such (I mean, holy and good men; generally quick-sighted, but particularly blinded) generally have been, and are at this day, the main Props, and Supporters of all those adulterate and Anti-Evangelical Interests, and Combinations of men, which are found in the Christian world: (although I make a little more question, whether they also were such, who were the first Founders, and Authors of them.) Such persons as these now and then found within the Territories of the *Romish* profession, have been, and are; the breath of the Nostrils of that Religion: Such as these, taking part with the Admirers of, and Contenders for, the Common-Prayer-Book, prescribed Liturgies, &c. Keep life and soul together in this party of men amongst us. Some such persons likewise, have incorporated themselves with that body of men, who doze upon the *Prelatical Hierarchy* (as if it had either Scripture, or sound Reason, to friend, or both) are helpers in chief to prolong the days of that Interest, which otherwise would

would soon be Apotymogized by the *Christian* world. And were there not some persons of the Character mentioned in the numerous rebuke of choice, who flatter *Christian* Princes into formal *Antichristianism*, by teaching them to lay claim to both Swords, as well the Spiritual, as the Temporal; neither would this Generation, or Sect of men, lay up their wealth at that rate of height and confidence, which now they do. It were easie to adde many more instances, if need were: But by what hath been lately, and formerly, discoursed in these papers, it plainly appeareth, that the holy and good men, who have interessed themselves in the cause of Prelacy, and avouched the descent of it from the *Great Apostle and High Priest*, of *Christian* Profession, by accepting their Office of Ministry from it, are they who have corruption on it (as the *Bishop* had on *Saul*, when he persecuted *David*, 1 *Sam.* 23. 21. Yand in, and by, the exercise of their Ministry, are the chief Contributors towards the maintenance of the life of it in the world. Therefore those worthy qualifications of holiness and goodness, in such Ministers, are so far from being any reasonable Grounds, or Motives, unto *Christians* to strengthen their hand in the way of their present standing and relation unto Prelacy, by a conscientious attendance on them in their Ministry, that the evil tendency of this Ministry considered, they are rather grand dissuaves herefrom. For sicke the shores and props from under a crane and tottering building, the fabricke will soon fall as fast as the walls of *Jericho*, to the ground. *Sathan* by none of all his other Methods, or Devices, is able to consume the peace of his Kingdom upon such terms of advantage, as by tempting holy and good men with secret overtures, or promises of enjoying the goodly and great things of the world, to fall down and worship him. Nor hath God any means more proper to weaken this Kingdom, and prepare it for destruction, than by opening the eyes of his Servants, that darkness be no longer for a Vision unto them, and that they hasten out of *Babylon*; which whilst their eyes were held, they verily thought to be *Jerusalem*.

Argument FV.

But God himself hath, from time to time, given testimony to that Ministry, which you would perswade us to decline as being unlawful, by granting the conversion of many souls unto himself to be wrought by it, together with the education of many (formerly converted) in their most holy Faith. Yes, he hath done much good by it in both these kinds, in this very Nation, since he brake the yoke of *Romish* subjection from

from

from off the neck of it: Or doth not such a gracious concurrence, or co-operation, of God as this with a Ministry, amount to as much as the setting of his Seal unto it that it is true, and such wherein he delighteth, the Apostle Paul writing thus to the *Corinthians*, *For the Seal of mine Apostleship are ye in the Lord*, 1 Cor. 9. 2. Can it then, be unlawful for Christians to here such Ministers, whom God himself countenanceth, and blesteth, in their work?

Answer

1. That voice from Heaven [that is from God.] *Come out of her my people*, [meaning out of *Babylon*, the mother of fornications] *Rev.* 18. 4. sheweth that there may be conversion of Souls, even in *Babylon*, and this (as seems not improbable) by the Spurious Ministry that is exercised here. It is no way as like, that those persons, whom God, by the Name of, *his people*, warneth by a voice from Heaven, to come out of *Babylon*, were *his people*, that is, truly regenerate, and believing, before they entered into *Babylon*, and that afterwards they went, and took up their dwellings here. If conversion may be wrought by a *Babylonish* Ministry, it is a clear case, that it is not universally, and in all cases, a convincing proof of a legitimate and true Ministry. And therefore whereas the Apostle saith to the *Corinthians*, *the seal of his Apostleship*, it was not simply, or so much, in respect of their conversion by him unto the Faith, but rather in respect of the extraordinary manner, and high hand of divine power, which appeared with him, and in him, for their conversion; without which he seems so imply, that in respect of their more than ordinary indisposition to submit unto the Gospel; being a wealthy and worldly-wise people, and under several disadvantages otherwise, there had been little likelihood of their conversion to the Faith, especially, in such considerable numbers, as now, by this means had embraced it. For upon some such account as this it is, that he reminds them in these words, *Truly the signs of an Apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds*; 2 Cor. 12. 12. From this passage, and the words next following with some others in these two Epistles it appears, that God judged it necessary and meet that this his Apostle should make more use of his gift of Miracles amongst this people, in order to their conversion, and confirmation in the Faith, then in any other place, whither he was sent to preach the Gospel. This plainly sheweth them to have been a Generation of men of that Character, which our Saviour pointeth at in those, to whom he said, *Except ye see signs and wonders*,
ye

ye will not believe. John 4. 21. which temper, or complexion of mind, suggests a great estrangement in men from God, and an utter unacquaintedness with his Nature and Attributes. Therefore the Apostle affirming the *Corinthians* to be, *the Sons of his Apostleship* [meaning, an effectual proof, and confirmation of the truth of it; and that he received it from God] intendeth it not in respect of their conversion by him, simply considered; but of those miraculous appearances of God with him, for, and in, the effecting of it. So that nothing can be concluded from hence to prove true conversion unto God, to be alwayes, or in all cases, an argument, or proof, that that Ministry, by which it is wrought, is from God. For the further clearing of which it may be considered;

1. That God, in his dispensations, and applications of himself unto the children of men, pursueth a very great difference between times of ignorance, and times of knowledge; indulging many things in way of favour, mercy, and compassion, unto persons offending through the ignorance of his will, when this ignorance is not affectate, or willingly, and upon a cursed design of sinning more freely, kept and maintained in the soul, but hath been, and is, occasioned, either by the scantiness of Light, or shortness of the means about them; whereby to come to the knowledge of the truth, or else by the weakness and slowness of their understandings, or else by meer incogitancy, or that backwardness of making distinct enquiry after truth, which so easily (and almost universally) beseteth flesh and blood; or lastly, by means of a strong and flattering persuasion that they know the truth already, and so need not make any such enquiry after it; God (I say) is wont to make many large allowances in grace and favour unto those that are ignorant of his will upon any of the occasions now mentioned, though they act contrary to it, which he will at no hand indulge unto those, that either know, or easily may know it, and yet will notwithstanding walk in the sight of their own eyes, and in the ways of their own hearts. This observation (I verily believe) for both number and clearness of Scripture testimonies, may compare with any other truth asserted here. The places that speak to the heart of it, were they drawn together, and a little argued, would amount to a just Volume. I shall mention onely one (a Text well known) and point to a few others. *And the times of this ignorance God winked at*; but now *commandeth all men every where to repent*; because he hath appointed a day (that is, he now maketh known unto the world that he hath appointed a day; for the day was appointed as much in the former times, as now; but things in Scripture are frequently

quently said to be done, when they are made manifest, wherein he will judge the world in righteousness, &c. Acts 17. 31. It is evident from hence in the general (for we must not now stand to scan particulars) that God was much more favourable to the same kind of sinners, who sinned in times of ignorance, then he was resolved to be unto those that should sin in times of greater light. If you question in the least the truth of the observation now propounded, these Texts (with their fellows of like import) are of sufficient authority to set your judgments at liberty, Luke 12. 47, 48. Gen. 22. 5, 6. Numb. 15. 20, 31. Psal. 94. 10. 97. 6, 7. Rom. 1. 18, 19, 20, 21, &c. 2. 18. John 9. 41. 25. 22. Luke 23. 34. Titus 3. 10. 1 Tim. 1. 13. Heb. 5. 2. 6. 4, 5, 6. James 4. 17. Unto these Scriptures, I only subjoyne (for their Sympathy in notion) a memorable saying of an ancient Father and Martyr: *The simple error [or ignorance] of men might be pardoned [by God], but when he hath inspired them with, or discovered, the truth; if now they transgress, they sin without the pardon [or leave] of ignorance (a);* meaning, that they are not like to find that favour, or mercy, which God is wont to vouchsafe unto those, that sin out of meer ignorance.

Ignosci potest
simpliciter
vanis :
Inspiratio
vero, &
revelationem
Hanc, sine ig-
norantia ve-
re peccatur.
pr. Ep. 63.

This Consideration leadeth us by a straight line to this Conclusion; that during that long tract of time; wherein God judgeth it meet to punish, try, and exercise the Christian world with Prelatical encroachments, and the un-natural swellings of Episcopal Power, and consequently to suffer the reasons & understandings of those, who otherwise might, and (doubtless) would have detected, and withstood, those high Usurpations over his free-born Sons and Daughters to be so held; or otherwise incumbred and diverted, as to overlook the intemperances of his mind in the Scriptures against those monstrous exorbitancies in his Church; that God (I say) during the times of this ignorance, and incogitancy, amongst Christians, might in mercy do good to the souls of some, even by such a Ministry, which he never allowed, nor approved, but only tolerated until the times of Reformation; yea, and which he will not allow his people to countenance, or credit, by resorting unto it, when once he hath caused the irregularity of it to be brought to light, and the Gospel to utter and speak out that enmity, which it beareth to it. Nor is it like, that when he shall have plainly, and to the full conviction of reasonable and sober men, discovered the nakedness and shame of it, that ever he will have to do, or co-operate with it, either to the conversion, or edification, of any soul more. And as Abraham lived well, enjoyed the love of God, thrived in his estate,

estate, and prospered in the world, whilst he lived in his own Countrey, amongst his kindred, and in his Father's house, before God called him out from hence to dwell in the Land of *Canaan*, where he intended to bless and prosper him: yet seven times more, whereas had he disobeyed the call of God, and continued in his Father's house still, this call notwithstanding, doubtless he had highly provoked God; neither would his own Countrey, Kinred, or Father's house, have been the same unto him in comfort and peace, which formerly they had been: In like manner, though an honest and upright soul may be in the love and favour of God, and thrive competently in its spiritual estate, under a *Prelatical Ministry* (and haply in *Babylon* it self) whilst it remains ignorant of the mind and will of God concerning its removal, and wanteth light to discern the evil of such standings; yet if it shall chuse, and resolve, to keep these postures, or standings, after that God shall have called unto it to forsake them, they are not like to yield any of their former accommodations unto it; nor is God like to take the same delight in (or rather to shew the same compassion on) this soul, which he did before: but according to the observation, and saying of *David*, *He turneth a fruitful Land into barrenness, for the wickednesse of them that dwell therein*, *Psal.* 107. 34. If it be demanded; but when, or how, doth God call any soul, or person, from under a *Prelatical Ministry*, or out of *Babylon*? I answer; when by a clear light he discovers the sinfulness, or (which is the same, in effect) the danger, or threatening consequence, of a mans abiding under the former, or in the latter. Conviction of any thing sinful, or unlawful, in any of our wayes, is a loud call from God unto repentance and reformation. And as *Abraham's* obedience unto the call of God, when he called him out from his own Country, Kinred, and Father's house, is commended by this, *that he went out, not knowing whither he went*, (*Heb.* 11. 8.) but sped never the worse for this: So when God shall call us from under an unlawful Ministry, it is not *Christian*-like to make any such allegation, or plea, as this, against our ready and cheerful submission to his call; we know not where we shall mend our selves, or find the like spiritual provisions, we are like to be losers by the change, &c. It would be much more worthy a Son, or Daughter, of God in this case, to consider and work upon that which *David* immediately subjoyneth to the passage lately cited from him: *He turneth the WILDERNESSE into a standing water, and dry ground into water springs; and there he maketh the hungry to dwell, that they may prepare a City for habitation, &c.* *Psal.* 107. 35, 36, 37, 38. They who shall forsake a polluted Ministry, though otherwise plausible, and in all points besides lively resembling

the true Ministry of *Christ*, upon divine conviction of the pollutedness of it, need not fear that they shall be losers in their spiritual estates hereby, or suffer in their inner man. The *woman clothed with the Sun* Rev. 12: when she fled from the City into the wilderness, being (as it appears) admonished by God so to do, had a place here prepared for her by God, where she was fed and nourished [with a more wholesome diet, doubtless, then she should have been in the City] for many years.

3. Although for argument sake, and in part (I confess) for probability sake, and likelihood of truth, it hath been granted, that some have been truly and savingly converted to the faith, and some edified, by a *Prelatical* Ministry, yet I believe it will sorely rack the parts and learning of the greatest Patrons of it, to make any demonstrative proof of either, especially of the former. It was a right and useful observation of *Aristotle*, that to take *para rēn ēs dia rēn*, that which follows in time for the effect of that which goeth before, is a common mistake amongst men. Those that have been converted after, or upon the hearing of a Sermon, possibly might not be converted by it. Again, it is well known unto those, that are but competently versed in Ecclesiastical Records, as well of ancient, as of latter times, that great numbers both of men and women, have been savingly wrought upon by other means and dispensations of God, and not by hearing Ministers of a *Prelatical* creation. Not to insist upon particulars in this kind, as either the conversion of *Constantine* by reading the *Sibylline* Oracles, as some of these records report; or of *Augustine*, begotten unto God (as himself in his *Confession* giveth the *Christian* world to understand) between a miracle (or the miraculous voice of *Tolle, et Lege*, take up, and read, heard by him in a Garden oft repeated, as with a singing tone) and the reading of those Texts of Scripture, *Rom.* 13, 13, 14. or of *Vilormus*, *Antonius*, and several others, mentioned by him in these writings, as brought off from Heathenisme unto God by the like, or not much unlike, means, (or of others that might, without number, be collected out of other Authors). *Baronius* reports that three whole Nations, the *Franks*, the *Goths*, the *Longobards*, were converted from *Paganisme*, and many impious errours, unto the *Christian* Faith, by three women; the *Franks*, in *Gallia*, by *Chrotildis* (a *Burgundian*); the *Goths*, in *Spain*, by *Ingundes* (a *Frank*); the *Longobards*, in *Italy*, by *Theodolinda* a *Bavarian*. Besides the *Woman clothed with the Sun*, &c. (of whom we lately spake, and by whom we signified, according to the concurrent testimony of all Expositors, that I have

have seen, or heard of, is meant the true Church of Christ, consisting of real and true Believers, during the whole term of the grandure of the Beast, and whilst the world went *wondering after him* [that is, whilst the Great Body, or Bulk of visible Professors throughout the Christian world round about him, owned his [spiritual], and consequently his temporal Jurisdiction also, over them] *fled* (as we likewise heard) *into the wilderness* [namely, from the Dragon, who had now sily, and undiscernably to the greatest part of professing Christians, conveyed and wound himself into the said two-horn'd Beast] here, by the gracious interposure of God, to be *fed and nourished*. Now this *Woman* (the true Church) was not barren, but brought forth children, Sons and Daughters unto God, during her abode in the wilderness from first to last: but she brought not forth these children by the knowledge of a *Prelatical Ministry*; the Ministers of this Order exercising their Ministry in the City [I mean, openly, and in places prepared, and allowed, for such purposes, by the Civil Magistrate, and so had no occasion to *flee into the Wilderness*, or to seek solitary and private places for the employment of their talent in this kind]: Unless we shall conceive, that the *Woman* we speak of, was all along supplied with children out of the City, by the publique Ministry here, God, secretly admonishing, and perswading those Sons and Daughters of his, that were begotten by such illegitimate Fathers, as soon as, or not long after, they were spiritually born, to with-draw themselves from under the hand of such Fathers, and to joyn themselves unto his true Church and People in the Wilderness, here to be *fed and nourished*, that is, to be built up in their most Holy Faith, and prepared for their Heavenly Glory. So that one of these two Propositions must needs be yielded; either that conversion, for many ages by-past, hath been wrought by other means, and by another Ministry, than that of a *Prelatical* descent, and so not necessarily by this; or in case this Ministry hath converted any, that these upon their conversion, have been required by God not to remain, or sit still under it, but to seek their edification amongst their Brethren in Assemblies of a better complexion, and from a Ministry of a more honourable and lawful extraction. The former of these granted, confirmeth the Argument in hand: the latter, the main cause we have undertaken.

(and lastly) Concerning that great good Service in the cause of Religion, which is pleaded to have been done in former dayes, by the Ministry so much decryd by us, in this our Nation: I confess that our great *High Priest*, who is more able than Priests taken from

among men, *mercifully, sufficiently to compassionate the ignorant, unwary, and those that are led out of the way,* (Heb. 5. 2.) did so far shew mercy unto some, who in the simplicity and uprightness of their hearts, suspecting no evil in such an action, compounded (I might say, compounded) with the *Prelates* for their Ministerial functions, that he kept them faithful unto him in his work, and vouchsafed them the great honour of co-operating with them to the bringing home of souls unto God. But,

1. The number of these was but small, scarce exceeding the proportion of *one of a City, and two of a Tribe*. Out of the great Cloud of *Prelatical Priests* (for their Ordination baptizeth them by that name, nor are they offended at it) *Sathan* rained upon the people, *Snares of Idolatrous and Superstitious conceits, and practises, without end* : and in these snares of death the feet of the greater part of the poor ignorant souls in the Nation, are taken, and held fast, to this day. Nor is it any breach of charity to conceive and think, that for the greatest part of these Ministers, were in their course of preaching, more zealously bent to beget Sons and Daughters to the Church of *England* (in their notion) than unto God ; although possibly (to allay all seeming hardness in the saying) they might suppose that men and women being made the true Sons and Daughters of the Church of *England*, were hereby made the true Sons and Daughters of God also. For what may not *Ignorance, and Interest*, conspiring together, suppose ? Doth not the Apostle, speaking of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the Truth say, that they supposed gain to be godliness, admonishing *Timothy* to withdraw himself from men of such importune and unreasonable suppositions, 1 Tim. 6. 5. But for the Church of *England*, who shall live, when either of her Sons, or Fathers, will be able to declare her Generation, or satiate the world, who, or what kind of creature he is ?

2. Those few Ministers of the *Prelatical* Sanction, whom *Christ* was pleased to separate from their fellows, in blessing their labours to the begetting of Sons and Daughters unto God in the Nation, were smothered in their noses, and as thorns in the eyes, of those who had intrusted them with a Ministerial employment, being by them looked upon as a spurious and illegitimate brood of children, and as walking contrary to the Interest, both of the Spiritual Lords, their Fathers, and of the Lady, the Church of *England*, their mysterious Mother : Yea, for their laboriousness, zeal, and faithfulness unto God, and men, in the work

work of their Ministry, which, by reason of the success that God gave unto them in the hearts and affections of the people, their Ghostly Fathers were not able, or rather, not willing to distinguish from Schism, Faction, Popularity, &c. they were evil entreated, injuriously handled, vexed with Summoners and Apparitors, cited into their Courts (where they must, at their peril, appear at the day and hour appointed, how long and wearisome, how unreasonable, or expensive, how tempestuous, or dangerous soever their journey thither should be) here to be falsely charged, to be vilified, and reproached, before all that are present, by Chancellors, Commissaries, &c. (persons who many times know not their right hand from their left, in things appertaining unto God; as meet to sit in judgement upon a learned and godly Minister, as in the Greek proverb, *ὅτι πρὸς αὐτῶν*, as an Ass is to play upon a Harp) and after all this, were sometimes silenced or suspended, deprived, degraded, imprisoned, yea constrained through an experimental sense of the implacableness of these bloody avengers, to commit themselves unto the Seas, how inconvenient or dangerous soever, either through age, tenderness or weakness of constitution, present indisposition of body, or otherwise such journeying were like to prove unto them, and to seek for a Sanctuary in strange Lands. So that the Ministers that with greatest zeal and faithfulness planted the saving knowledge of God, and promoted the Interest of true Godliness in the Nation, though (being led out of the way by the false light of those times) they owned the *Prelates* in their Usurpations, by accepting their Office of Ministry from their unhallowed hands, yet the *Prelates* soon after, namely, as soon as they saw or heard, that they held a straight course in preaching the Gospel, disowned them, and took from them, at least from many of them, and their will was the same towards them all, but that prudentials hindered the sameness of execution upon some, by silencing and suspending them, the exercise of that Ministry, and so in effect, the Ministry it self, which they had conferr'd upon them. So that by this time, if we respect the reality of things rather than the rigour or formality of words, the Ministers we now speak of, were no Ministers of a Prelatical investiture: for they who had invested them, devested them again. Adde hereunto (that which we may, not only in charity, but according to the guidance of reason it self, suppose their conscienciousness and loyalty unto God, in all other their wayes and actions considered) that had they known or once suspected, the great evil of putting their heads under *Prelatical* hands to receive an Evangelical function from them, they would rather have suffered them to be taken from their shoulders, as *John Baptist's* head

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was, by the hands of the common Executioner. This being so, they were but in a very deminutive sense Ministers of a *Prelatical* Ordination, nor ought they in reason, to be simply, or absolutely, termed such. For when the mind and will of a man are really set and bent against the doing of any thing whatsoever, that is sinful, in case he shall through ignorance, or mistake, do any thing which is sinful, this action is imputable unto him only in the letter, not in the spirit of it. For so far as his will stood against it, and was not consenting to it [that is, or as far as, it was sinful] it was not properly, or in a moral and equitable consideration, his action, but rather to be charged upon the ignorance that was in him; nothing that a man doth, being, in moral equity and fairness of construction, chargeable upon him as his action, but only what his will, and as far as his will, was consenting unto in the doing of it; according to that of the Apostle, (who is not wont to flatter himself, or to extenuate, or deny his sinful infirmities at any time) *Now if I do that, which I WOULD NOT, it is NO MORE I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me*, Rom. 6. 20. Yet further, the Ministers of whom we now speak, & by whom much real good was done to the souls of many in the Nation, applyed themselves wholly and intirely to the work of Christ in preaching the Gospel; and did not make merchandize of the word of God by wrestling or perverting it at any time, as if at any where spake to the heart of the *Prelatical* Interest, or recommended any such Officer, or Ruler, unto the Church of Christ, as a Prelate, or Bishop, (in the by-sense, or high sense of the word, or gave him power to obtrude what, and what numbers, of Ceremonies, and Apocryphal prayers, and prayers only so called, he pleased, upon the people of God; as well Ministers, as others, upon severe penalties to be inflicted on those whose Consciences were not wide enough to swallow them. Now such Ministers, who, though having received their Office from *Prelates*; yet still in the course and work of their Ministry, wholly and constantly wave, and decline their cause from the one end of it to the other, never opening their mouths to cast respects, either upon their Office, or anything, that hath so much as one lineament of their *Image*, or one letter of their *Superscription*, upon it, and instead hereof, shall zealously and faithfully preach up *Jesus Christ* in the glory of all his Offices, as the Gospel asserteth and declareth them, which consequentially, is the preaching down of *Prelacy*; as the bringing in of the Ark of God unto *Dagon's* Temple, was the downfal and destruction of that Idol; such Ministers, I say, that shall quit themselves in the way of their Ministry, upon such termes as these, do constructively, and in effect; and with as much advantage to the glory of God, and edification of men,

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renounce their *Prelatical* Ordination, as if they should do it more literally and formally. So then, all things weighed in the ballance of equity, the Ministers, unto whom God gave the honour to *triumph in Christ*, (as the Apostle's phrase is (2 Cor. 2. 14.) and by whom to *make manifest the favour of his knowledge* amongst the Inhabitants of this Nation, were not Ministers of a *Prelatical* Ordination (in any compleat, direct, or thorough sence of the denomination) but only in some such mysterious and obscure notion, as that, wherein the Beast is termed, *the Beast which is not, and yet is*, Rev. 17.8. They that were roundly, right down, without any abatement, or need of explication, such have, amongst them, in matters of true Religion, sound knowledge, and piety towards God, reduced the generality of the Nation to a morsel of Bread: All those Idolatrous and Superstitious conceits, and practices, all that bloody ignorance and prophaneſſe, all that customary boldness in sinning, that hatred of goodness and good men, which are the nakedness and shame of the Land, and render it obnoxious to divine displeasure, may justly call this Generation of men, either Fathers, or Foster Fathers, or both.

Argument V.

Many learned and good men have been, and many such at this day, are very confident, that ordination by *Bishops*, in the high sence of the word, is regularly founded on the Scriptures; yea, and that there can be no lawful, or true Minister any where created, where there is not the hand of such a Bishop to sanctifie the action, and to raise it to that worth and dignity, that it may be meet to yeild the sacred fruits of a Gospel-Ministry. And it is generally known, and acknowledged, that Ordination of Ministers by Bishops, in the upper signification of the word, hath been very antiently, and for many ages by-past, practised in the Church, scarce any man questioning, or contradicting it. Therefore why should the hearing of such ministers be now censured as unlawful?

Answer.

This *Argument* calleth for the consideration of sundry particulars for it's full and due satisfaction: Others, many have largely and substantially answered all that is pretended, and pleaded, from the Scripture, in the behalf, either of the Order or Office of Bishops, in the sence of the word lately specified, or of their Sole power of Ordination: So that

that as unto these, I shall be very cursory and brief, chiefly pointing at the heads of some few Considerations, whereby it will be made manifest, that although all that the Argument saith and pretendeth unto, should be granted as true, yet all will signifie little, or nothing, as to the proof of what is intended. Therefore,

1. *Learning*, is very neer of kin unto *knowledge*, if it be not the same. Now *knowledge*, though it be a very useful and commendable endowment, yet it hath one bad property, (which the Apostle himself taketh, and giveth notice of, 1 Cor. 1. 8.) *it puffeth up*; that is, it is apt to lift men up into a confident conceit that there is more worth in them, than in deed and in truth there is. Neither will a very good degree of goodness in the same subject, at many turns, and in many cases, prevent the operation of this evil property upon it. Learned and knowing men, though good men, will too frequently assume more unto themselves, than by the assignment of God, or good reason, cometh to their share. The Apostle *Paul* plainly signifieth that God knew that he would have been *exalted above measure through the abundance of revelations* vouchsafed unto him, if the excessive heat of his propension in this kind had not been corrected and allayed by a *Messenger of Satan*, sent and given unto him to buffet him, 2 Cor. 12. 7.

2. When men of learning and knowledge more than ordinary, shall reflect upon their own worth in this kind, and hold intelligence with their great parts and abilities (as the best of men, thus accomplished, are apt to do, witness the great Apostle *Paul* himself, who told the *Corinthians*, that though he was rude in speech [meaning, as they thought, and talked of him] yet not in KNOWLEDGE, 2 Cor. 11. 6. See also Eph. 3. 4.) especially when they shall be conceited withal, that their line of knowledge and understanding is raised higher, than really it is (which is a weaknesse frequently incident to the strongest of this Generation), they are precipitately disposed to *presume* [as our former translation read it; or, to be wise; or, to savour, as the word, *opony*, oft signifieth] *above that which is written* (1 Cor. 4. 6.) and so to embrace (sometimes) and to assert, with great confidence, such notions and tenets for truths, which the *Word of Truth*, diligently consulted, and well understood, absolutely disclaimeth; yea, and which sober and sound reason it self will not brook. There is scarce any age but hath yielded instances more than enough to confirm the truth of this observation. The best Records of Antiquity, yea, the most unquestioned writings of the most learned and devout Fathers themselves proclaim it

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it alone; in which it appears that they did not always build *Silver, Gold, or Precious Stones*, upon the true foundation, but sometimes, *hay, stubble and wood*, in their Read. Neither is the Scripture it self barren of sayings, and passages of story, which look the same way. But my intended brevity forbids me to insist upon Quotations, where they may be omitted with as little damage to the cause in hand, as they may upon the present occasion: and as for those, which the works and writings of our Fathers afford upon the account, they have been already drawn out, and presented unto the world by others: Yet, who is there but either knoweth, or hath heard from those who do know, that seldom or never, did any error, that proved of any dangerous, or sad consequence, spring amongst Christians, but might call some person of choice parts a learning, Father? The common saying (which carrieth a truth in it worthy more consideration, than is by many given to it) is, *Nullum est magnum ingenium sine mixtura insanie*. There is no great wit, but hath a mixture [or alloy] of madness in it. So that men of great learning and parts are no infallible Oracles to consult about a dubious opinion, whether it be an error, or no.

3. The notion, conceit, or opinion of an *Hyper-presbyterian Episcopacy*, is of such a calculation, nature, and import, that without the assistance of, or any monitory suggestion from Sathan, it is as apt to breed, and to be engendred, between a corrupt ambitious heart, and an head rank of wit, and learning, as the Bull-rush is to grow out of the mire. Some indeed have laid the mischievous brat at Sathan's door, confidently avouching him, by reason of the enormous, and even supernatural antipathy in it unto God, and true Godliness, to be the Father of it: But herein they rather flatter, than accuse, or charge, that unhappy parcel of flesh and blood, which first gave warmth and formation unto it in the womb of their brain. And whereas some, expert in the Records of Antiquity, carry up the day of the dawning of it upon the Christian world, to the year 140 after Christ, or thereabouts; others, seeming as capable as they of the same pretension, bring it down to about the year 300; the truth is, that though both these calculations of the Nativity of it, especially the former, give it the opportunity and advantage of a long and specious prescription, yet the bewitching complexion of it considered, together with the amorous inclinations towards such objects, so frequently found in pregnant wits, and large endowments, which are apt to afford men lively hopes of enjoying them; it may rather seem strange that it is not more ancient, than either of the dates mentioned will allow it to be, and, in respect

of time, nearer to some Apostolical Institution. It seem's (indeed) that even in the dayes of the Apostles, there was one (whom the Apostle John call's; *Diotrephes*, Ep. 3. ver. 9.) that had an Episcopall Embryo, an unform'd conception of a Bishoprick, in his heart: for he did *amertowne* *yeptatun*, loved a Lordly Superiority over, or amongst his Christian Brethren: but for want of an artificial Head (as is probable) to give unto this natural conception its specifical and due form, it proved an abortion, and like *the untimely fruit of a woman, which never seeth the light of the Sun*. It is no where found that *Diotrephes* ever was a formal Bishop, although he acted the part of a Bishop in not suffering the writings of an Apostle to take place against his own Interest, in the Church, *John* Ep. 3. ver. 9.

4. The notion of *Episcopacy* (in the lofty sense of the word) being once started, though by one person only, in the Church, and brought into consideration and discourse amongst Christians, it was easie to prophesie,

Plures annabunt thynni, & cetera crescent:
More tunies will come swimming to the bair,

and that the generality of men, whose gifts and parts of learning, wit, &c. were paramount to those of the ordinary sort of their Brethren, understanding themselves more capable, and likely than others, to ascend the Throne of this honour, in case it were once built, and well settled in the Church, would be very diligent and studious in finding out all colourable and plausible pretences to commend such an office unto the people, and to perswade them that it would conduce much to their Christian welfare, if they did live under it, and subject themselves unto it. And though there have been many, both in ancient, and later dayes, conscientious and learned, that had not the mortal in their foreheads (wherewith the Prelatical Advocates amongst us, have, more generally at least, steeled theirs) to obtrude the Office we speak of, upon the world, under the high and indisputable title of *Jus Divinum*; yet were they so far overcome with the enticing sweetness of the morsel, as to swallow it as lawful, though of humane preparation and contrivance. Never did there a dead body, or carcase, falling on the earth, by the scent and savour of it, more effectually draw the Eagles together about it, than the pleasant notion and conceit of the Episcopall dignity, having once been named in the Christian Church, allure and engage many persons of eminent gifts and abilities, age after age,

age, in the maintenance, approbation, and commendation of it. They are not like to *speak evil of dignities*, who live in hope and expectation of enjoying them themselves. So that all circumstances duely weighed, the great multitude of learned Assertors of the cause of *Prelacy*, is but a slender argument to prove, either the goodness, or lawfulness of it. *Who is he* (saith the Son of *Sirach*) *that hath been tryed by Gold, and found perfect?* Ecclus. 31. 10.

5. As for the Arguments and Grounds, which these learned Disputers commonly levie, and urge from the Scriptures, to compel the judgments and consciences of men to a submissive and quiet acknowledgement, that their high places and functions in the Church, are of kin to *Divinity* (Acts 19. 35.) *The Image which fell down from Jupiter*, and that they also came from Heaven, and are supported by the stately and strong pillar of *Jus Divinum*; the truth is, that being weighed in the ballance, I do not say of accurate reason, but of common sense itself, they would be found too leight to balace the floating vessel, wherein that proud Lady, *Episcopacy*, with all her triobular accoutrements, is imbarqued; yea, and were it not for some poor relief, ever and anon brought in from the shattered and sophisticated Records of afterages, scarce one decree above ridiculous. I shall in few words, give you a taste, though not of the letter, or words, (this being a part that cannot be acted, but on a larger Stage, than we are now upon) but of the spirit, strength, and substance, of some of their chief arguings from the Scriptures; by which you may give a neer guess how little their longsome dissertations and discourses upon the point signifie. From Eph. 4. 8, 11, &c. they reason to no more purpose than thus: *Christ, when he ascended up on high—gave gifts unto men: and he gave some Apostles,—some, Pastors and Teachers, &c. Ergo* he gave some *Diocesan Bishops*. But if such Bishops as these were given by Christ at his Ascension, why should the Apostle hide them, either behind the *Apostles*, or behind his *Pastors*, as if he were ashamed of them? For the Great Officers we now speak of, are at a great loss amongst which of the Officers, expressly named by the Apostle, they should seek for their divine Institution, or Donation by Christ unto the Church. One while, when their courage is up, they claim high, and will needs find their Institution in, and together with, the Apostles, as their Predecessors, under whom their Successors also (as they plead) who they cannot (being so affectionately convinc'd through the in-evidence of the thing) but presume themselves, and all of their Order, to be, were comprehended in the same Institution with them. Otherwhile, fear-

ing such a pretence as that, to be too obnoxious to the incredulity of all considering and un-engaged men, they fall lower, and judge it more passable to take up with *Pastors and Teachers*, and content themselves with part and fellowship with them in their Institution. Thus we see our Spiritual Lords wandring up and down to seek a divine Institution for their high Functions and Dignities: but it is no marvel if they cannot find that which is not. Notwithstanding they knock hard at several other doors for relief, but none openeth unto them, nay, they are all made fast with bars of Iron against them. From these words of the Apostle to Timothy, (1 Tim. 1. 3.) *As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, &c.* In conjunction with those, *Lay hands suddenly on no man, &c.* (1 Tim. 5. 22.) they conclude, Therefore Timothy was made Bishop of Ephesus, a Diocesan Bishop, by Paul. Whereas the expresse tenour of the words, *I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus*, riseth up (as it were) with manifest indignation against such an inference, as might be shewed and proved at large, but that this hath been lately done to the stopping of all mouths, that have either ingenuity or conscience, belonging to them (a). Holy and zealous men, in both which qualifications Timothy excelled, need no beseeching or exhorting, to abide, or reside, upon their Bishopricks, or to attend the cure of souls committed unto them. Or if they will understand the place either of *Timothie's* being made Bishop of Ephesus, or of his accepting the Bishoprick hereof, being offered unto him by Paul, they shall do well, and un-like themselves, to follow his example, and not to be made Bishops, until they be sought unto, and desired to accept of the honour. Besides, Timothy was an Evangelist, 2 Tim. 4. 5. and so by virtue of his Office, had a right of power to do all those Canonical actions, as laying on of hands, &c. which our high assuming Bishops appropriate to their Apocryphal Functions. Therefore neither doth this Scripture take any pity at all upon their miserable cause. They shew themselves the Sons of impertinency also when they discourse unto us, Titus 1. 5. as if this Text had somewhat to say for them, the words being only these: *For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain [or rather settle, or place, καταστάσεις] Elders in every City, as I had appointed thee.* It is plain from the words, that Titus was LEFT [not feared, or settled] in Crete by Paul, for such business, or such services unto the Churches there, which might be dispatched within the space of a few months. And that he did not make his abode here many months, at least with Paul's consent, and that Paul intended to send for him away from hence, the winter following, or rather before, is evident

a) Mr. Prynne, in his Bishops of Timothy, &c. reprinted with additions, 1661. p. 1, 2, 3. (after the first script.)

dent from Chap. 3. vers. 12. And from other passages in the writings of this Apostle, it appears, that being called back by him from *Crete*, he employed him otherways, sending him up and down to several Churches; in several Countries upon occasion: nor is there the least mention any where found of his returning again unto *Crete* at any time after, nor is there (indeed) the least probability of it. Therefore our *Diocesan* Advocates vex and trouble this Scripture also (as they do several others) to no purposes, this with all the rest solicited in their cause, crying aloud unto them with one voice, *Depart from us, we know you not.* He that desires further conviction that neither *Timothy*, nor *Titus*, were ever made Bishops (in the now-ruling sence of the word) may receive it in abundance (together with the knowledge of many other things concerning that Generation of men, which would much enlighten the darkness of these times) by the perusal of a Treatise lately published by Mr. W. Prymme Esquire, under the Title of, *The Un-Bishoping of Timothy and Titus*, &c. This considered, it is no great marvel that learned men, more generally, who bare good will (more than enough to the Prelatical Interest and Cause, not onely in a times of a more ancient date, but even in latter years also, yea, within less than 140. years, all the Bishops, Arch-Bishops, Arch-Deacons, and Prelatical Clergy, themselves in this very Nation, [4.] esteemed it their wisdom, to stick in the inferior tenure of *Jus Humanum* for the Episcopal Dignity, fearing (as it seems, or however, as they had cause to fear) that *Jus Divinum* would be an adversary to it, and overthrow it. I crave leave, upon the occasion before us, to acquaint the Reader with a very memorable passage (if he hath not heard it formerly) of an Arch-Bishop in Scotland, who in a Recantation publicly made in the Synod of Fife, Anno. 1591. Professed *ex animo*, from his soul, That Bishops and Ministers by God's Word were all equal, and the very same: That the Hierarchy and Superiority of Bishops over other Ministers, hath no foundation at all in the Word of God, but was a meer humane Institution long after the Apostles times, from whence the Antichristian Papacy of the Bishop of Rome, hath both it's rise and progress: and that for 500. years last past, it hath been the chiefest instrument of persecuting, and suppressing the Truth and Saints of God, in all Countries and Kingdoms, as all Historians manifest. The name of this Great Exemplar (worthy to be had in everlasting remembrance) was, if my Author mistakes not, Patrick Adamson. But even this man, though he was at last one of a thousand *κατὰ τὴν ἐξομολογήσεω*, in his Repentance, yet was he first one also of many thousand *κατὰ τὴν ἀπειθήσειω*, who suffer themselves to be overcome of the tempting splendor of that new-divided worldly thing.

[4.] See Mr. W. Prymme's Un-Bishoping, &c. p. 76.

thing under an old spiritual name, commonly called *Bishoprick*: So that he also beareth witness, as well to the truth of the particular in hand (acknowledging in effect, that the Scriptures are perverted and wrested by those who make them speak, either for Bishops, or Arch-Bishops) as of the particular last proceeding, namely, that Bishopricks, notwithstanding the Scriptures, and they be at odds, have yet a bewitching property in them to make great Scholars, and learned men, who are in a capacity of enjoying them, excessively in love with them.

6. Nor hath it any thing of an argument in it worth the insisting on, to prove the lawfulness of attending the Ministry of a Prelatical Clergy, that the Professors of *Christianity*, have more generally attended such a Ministry ever since it had a being in the Church, which is (in our *English* phrase) time out of mind ten times over (as is on all hands confessed). For,

1. It being the counsel of the will of God (as we gave knowledge formerly) to suffer that plant of bitterness, *Episcopacy*, (in the Anti-Canonical sense of the word) not onely to be planted in the Soil of his Church, but to take fast root, to thrive and prosper, and to spread her branches far and neer, and bring forth fruit from many Ages, before he intended the *uprooting*, that tearing of it up by the roots, (of which our Saviour prophesieth as the common doom of all plants in the Church which should be planted by men, and not by his *Heavenly Father*, *Matth. 15. 23.*) he judged it meet, and well comporting with that his counsel, to suffer the generality of *Christian* Professors, to be so far deluded by the fair flourishes, and enticing pretences, of those who designed the setting up of the *Episcopal Government* over them, as to yield their necks unto the yoke, and so to conform themselves to all the constitutions, and Magisterial injunctions thereof in matters of Religion. For unless the multitude of Professors had been both at first, and for many after Ages, so far bewitched, as willingly to bow down at the feet of this exotique Government, it could never have taken that deep rooting in the world which now it hath done, nor made so much work for the right hand of Heaven, to rid the world fairly and fully of it, as now it is like to do. For though the compliance of many Kings, and Princes, and Nobles, yea, and of many wise and learned men; yea, and of some worthy and good men also, with it, were necessary (as God esteemeth things necessary in such cases) to make the mountain of it so strong, as (according to his permissive decree) it hath been, for many ages by-past, in many parts of the *Christian* world,

world, and is at this day in many, yet had not the generality, or main body of Christian people fallen in also, and made one and the same shoulder with them to support it, it had (in David's comparison) been as grass upon the house top, which withereth before it groweth up, where with the mower filleth not his hand, nor he that bindeth sheaves, bin some. So that the general practice of Christians in receiving their spiritual food from a Prelatical Ministry, though continued for many Generations, yet the practisers having all along suffered a spirit of slumber to grow upon them, (for the tares were sown, while men slept, Matth. 13. 25.) and God not judging it meet to awaken them, their example significeth little as to the justification of the practise.

2. As the Apostle saith of the poor Gentiles, that they were carried away to dumb idols; even as they were led, 1 Cor. 12. 2. So (the truth is) the common sort of Christians, through an un-Christian, yea, an un-man like, oisitancy and supinels of spirit, have been in all Ages (and are at this day) exceeding apt to be carried away with Opinions and Tenenes, even as they were, and are, led by their Teachers. It is a right saying of an Heathen, *Omnes malum credere, quam iudicare*: There is scarce any of us all but naturally had rather, even in matters of a moral and much more, in things of a spiritual, and religious) concernment, believe what others, whom we can have any pretence, or colour, to think well of, shall commend for truth unto us, than put our selves to the labour and travel of a serious and distinct examination whether it be truth, or no. *Offendit plerique lima laboris & mora*: to work at the file, is both toylsome, and tedious, and few there be that love it. This was observed long since, by him that said, *Many loth to weary themselves with searching out the truth, turn in to the errors next at hand* (a.) Yea, it was the saying of one that had been a Teacher of the Romish Faith, That had not God raised up, and sent Luther amongst them, they should have perswaded, and brought the people to eat hey. So then the Spiritual Guides and Teachers of Christian people having been (for many Generations) Ministers made such with Prelatical hands, and justifying this Ministry before their people, as legitimate and approved of God, both by their accepting it, and by their acting in the vertue, and by the authority of it, (besides all occasional pleadings for it otherwise) it is but matter of course (as it were) that their people should swallow it, and make no question about it for conscience sake.

3. The peoples attendance upon an Episcopal Ministry anciently, and near unto the times when Episcopacy was first conceived, and brought forth in the Christian Church, was nothing so broadly inconsistent

(a) Multi
radio in-
vestigant
de veri-
tatis, ad
proximas
diversas
errores.
Minor.
Felix.

fiſtence with the Rule of the Goſpel, as now it is; but by many degrees more tolerable, and deſenſible, than that attendance upon a Miniſtry of the ſame denomination, which is in theſe dayes exhibited unto it. The Biſhop that now is, (I mean, that is now commonly ſo called) is another kind of creature, ſpecifically diſtinct from thoſe that were ſo called, about the times when the Name (in the high ſignification of the word) was firſt heard in the *Chriſtian* world: For if the beſt Records of Antiquity ſignifie any thing, the Biſhops we ſpeak of, at, and ſome while after their firſt Original, were choſen by the people, who were to live under their inſpection and Government, in conjunction with their Miniſters: So that thoſe Miniſters, who were made afterwards by theſe Biſhops, were, in a ſence (viz. mediately, and remotely) made by themſelves (I mean by the people themſelves) in and by that act of theirs, whereby they cloſe their Biſhops, and gave them power (I do not mean, a lawful power, for ſuch was not in them to give) to ordain Miniſters for them. Now then if they did attend upon Miniſters Episcopally ordained, upon the term ſpecified, their example no wayes parallel's, no wayes countenance, much leſſe juſtifieth, the practice of any in theſe dayes, who from time to time ſit under a *Prætical* Miniſtry; conſidering that the Biſhops, which the world now affordeth, are of a quite different extraction from thoſe in ancient times, far more ſpurious and degenerate, the people of God being ſo far from chuſing, or deſiring them, that they make their way by an high hand to make themſelves Lords over them.

7. (and laſtly, for this) As for thoſe, who have dealt ſo effectually with their judgements and conſciences, as to make themſelves both able and willing, to conceive, that there can be no lawful Miniſtry, but that which ſprings from under a pair of Episcopall hands; the conceit is ſo prodigiouſly importune and unreaſonable, that to engage in any ſolemn or ſerious oppoſition to it, may ſeem to be a work proper onely for him that hath little elſe to do. Nevertheleſs, becauſe I find that there are not wanting amongst us, who have ſuffered themſelves to be baptized in the ſpirit of this conceit, (to the diſparagement of their judgements, to the enſnaring of their conſciences, and who knowes to what publique inconvenience beſides?) to ſet them at liberty from the bands of this enchantment, I muſt heartily and ſeriouſly recommend unto them the diligent peruſal of that elaborate and learned Diſcourſe of Mr. *W. Prymme* (lately mentioned, once and again) publiſhed the ſecond time with ſome enlargements, not long ſince, under the title of, *The Un-Biſhoping of Timothy, and Titus, &c.* In this Diſcourſe, beſides

ides that which is projected in chief (the vindicating the Holiness and Honour of *Jus Divinum*, from having any thing to do with the dunghill-Institution of the Episcopal Dignity : for so it detesteth to be abused for exalting it self so high as to claim *Jus Divinum*) the Reader shall find the privilege of ordaining Ministers, challenged by that Order of men we speak of, as incommunicable unto all others, vested by God himself in persons of another Order, and not at all in them considered (as they use to consider themselves in the business) in their elevation.

Argument VI.

Some again plead : That *Christ* hath purchased a liberty for all his, to seek, and to receive, their Christian edification where-ever they can find it, and where-ever they shall desire to seek it with any hope of finding it. So that they are not tied in Conscience unto any one sort, or kind of Ministers, but may as lawfully, and without sin, hear as oft as they please, even such Teachers, whose entrance into their Office of Ministry is most abominable and hateful unto God, as those, who enter by that door, which he hath sanctified, and appointed for this purpose, and so come to the great work of the Ministry with abundance of his blessing upon them : Especially they plead, that the hearing of the worst of Ministers is sin-free, if they deliver any thing that is good, for edification, and this be received : and in case they utter any thing of a contrary import, that this be rejected.

Answer.

This Argument favours of a spirit that hath flesh and bones relating to it, and these covered with a skin, which it desires to keep whole to sleep in. But,

1. The liberty purchased for us by *Christ*, is an un-valuable treasure, a benefit and privilege that passeth all humane understanding. But as in the true and right notion of it, it highly accommodates the Spirit, making it abundantly fruitful, as well in righteousness, as in joy, and peace ; yea, and in some respect, accommodates the flesh also, as namely by easing it of the insupportable burthen of the *Levitical Ceremonies* : So in a corrupt and false notion, it hath been from the beginning, and is at this day, made a pretence of much unworthiness, and a cloak and covering for many uncomely and sinful doings. The Apostle

a) Gal. 3. 13. admonishing the *Galatians* not to use that liberty whereunto they had been called by *Christ*; for an occasion unto the flesh, (a) [that is, for the encouraging and strengthening of themselves in any carnal practices, or ways unbecoming the Gospel] plainly implieth, that there is a great aptness in professors of the Gospel to stumble at this stone, and to think they may lawfully do many things under the covert of their *Christian* liberty, at which otherwise their Consciences would boggle, and stand more in awe of the word of God restraining them. Whereas the incomparable privilege of the liberty purchased for us by *Christ*, engageth us unto all things, which make, either for the honour of the Gospel, or for the comfort, peace, and salvation of men, upon higher, and more awful, and sacred terms, than otherwise we had been; yea, and upon the same terms, to refrain and forbear all things, though otherwise lawful (if they be not necessary alio) which are contrary unto, either the one, or the other. This is the plain and unquestionable Doctrine of the Scriptures; and is accordingly taught by the generality of Ministers learned in them. Now then,

2. The hearing of a Prelatical Ministry by those, who judge themselves strong, being a great offence, and stumbling, to their weak *Christian* Brethren, and this being known unto them to be, the practice is as diametrically repugnant to the Law of *Christian* liberty, as lightly a practice can be. For this Law (as the great Apostle hath drawn it up) is, that *Christians by love should serve one another* (b). Now what this Apostle speaketh elsewhere concerning material meat, is, in the case before us, altogether as applicable to the spiritual meat, or food, of *Christians*; nay, the misdemeanor in this case, is much greater, than that mentioned in the other. But if thy Brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably (c) [that is, according to the emphasis and weight of the phrase, as Expositors observe in sundry the like in Scripture] thou walkest EXCEEDING uncharitably. For if it be objected, that we are not bound by any rule of charity, to forbear our spiritual food, for the offence of any, as we are our temporal; I answer, yes: in the like sense, and respect, in which we are bound in charity towards a weak Brother, to forbear temporal meat, we stand bound to forbear spiritual also. If a Brother were so weak, as to be offended that I should eat any meat whatsoever in case of the utmost necessity for the support of my life, when I cannot come at any other, in this case I were not to regard his being offended, but to eat the meat which God hath given me to relieve me in my extremity, howsoever: The reason is, because in such a case I stand bound in duty towards God

e) Rom. 14.
15.
Adversus ne-
quias, ejus qui
diliguntur
contrarium fig-
nificant. Mede
a Apoc. p. 152

God to preserve my life, which I cannot do in any other way, but only by eating such meat, my eating of which may (as the case supposeth) offend my Brother. But when I may relieve my hunger, and sustain my life, by several kinds of meat, one of which my Brother judgeth it not lawful for me to eat, but taketh no offence at my eating any of the other, if in this case I should eat that which offendeth him, I should not (as the Apostle saith) *walk charitably towards him; but destroy him*, and so abuse my *Christian liberty*, and sin against *Christ*. There is altogether the same consideration in chusing our spiritual nourishment, and means of edification. Suppose we judge that we may, yea, and that we do edifie by resorting to a *Prelatical Ministry* (about which we shall notwithstanding a little demur before the close of this answer) yet knowing that our resorting hither, is an offence and scandal to many good *Christians*, though weak, God having afforded us great variety otherwise of worthy means for our Edification (as hath been proved formerly) (A), such a practise (were it in it self lawful, yet) being against charity, is an abuse of our *Christian liberty*, a kind of wanton and contemptuous trampling upon the peace and comfort of our weak Brethren (who may be as precious in the sight of God as our selves, notwithstanding their weaknesse) and consequently, must needs be a sin highly provoking the Lord *Christ*. Indeed if God had commanded us to hearken unto this Generation of Ministers, what means soever besides he should vouchsafe unto us for our edification, or should have threatned us with the vengeance of eternal Fire, if we did not hear them, in this case should any person be offended at us for hearing them, he must bear the burthen of his offence himself (for we should be innocent) but if under the circumstance mentioned, we shall comport in our attention with them, & a weak Brother shall be offended at our comportance in this kind; God will require his offence at our hand. An offence may be taken at the performance of a duty; but cannot be given but by an act of liberty.

Again, The misdemeanour of offending a weak Brother by receiving our spiritual meat from the hand of a Prelatical Servitor, is in this respect more sinful, than to offend him in eating any material meat would be, namely, that the offence given in the former case, is by an action or practise that is in it self, and out of the case of scandal, unlawful (as hath been proved at large) whereas in the latter case, the offence is given by an action, which simply, and in it self considered, is lawful: *For every creature of God* (saith the Apostle, speaking of material meat) *is good, and nothing to be refused, &c.* 1 Tim. 4. 4.

3. It hath been proved in the preceding *Considerations*, that the frequent recourse of Godly persons to *Prelatical* Ministers in the publick exercise of their Ministry, is, in several other respects, besides that of scandal and offence given unto weak *Christians*, a manifest breach of the Law of Charity; As 1. Because it encourageth such Ministers in an evil way, and hideth Repentance from their eyes: whereas their withdrawing from them, is a proper means to make them better acquainted with themselves, and to help them to be ashamed of their *Babylonian* preferment. 2. Because by countenancing and strengthening the hand of these men in their way, they help to harden the hearts of their great Lords and Masters also in the evil of their way, which is more provoking in the sight of God than the other. 3. Because by honouring the Ministers of the *Prelatical* Creation, with their dependance on them for the words of eternal life, and high concerns of salvation, they keep up and strengthen the Interest of the *Prelates* in the hearts and minds of the people, and so make the mountain of their power the more strong and durable; and consequently, bring upon their own heads the guilt of being accessary to all the outrages of persecution and cruelty, wherein this generation of men shall magnifie themselves against the Saints of the Most High. 4. Because by accepting of Ministers of an *Episcopall* recommendation and investiture, they wrong and weaken the right-vested by *Christ* in his respective Churches, for the choice and ordination of their respective Ministers. These particulars we argued more at large, and brought the truth of them into a clear light in the foregoing *Considerations*: therefore we only mention them here. The Reader may please to review *Consideration* 2, 3, 4—13, 14, 15. So that the liberty purchased for the Saints by *Christ*, is so far from being a reasonable ground whereon to justifie or warrant the practice condemned in these papers, that it is a most sovereign disswasive and retractive from it: For the greater love *Christ* hath any wayes manifested unto them, he hath laid so much the greater and stronger engagements upon them to love others, and more especially those of the household of Faith; and consequently, to refrain all wayes and doings that are inconsistent with this affection towards the one or the other.

4. (and lastly) The liberty purchased for the Saints by *Christ*, was intended by him only for their comfort, welfare and peace, not for their prejudice or loss: Therefore for any man to plead this liberty to embolden himself unto any such practice, whereby he is likely, or rather

rather caution but prejudice and enflame himself, and this in mat-
ters of greatest concernment unto him, must needs be an abuse of this
liberty. Now therefore the Servants of God to attend upon, or (which
is the same) to hold Communion with such a Ministry which is no
where approved, or sanctified by Christ in his Word, but obtruded up-
on Christ and with an high hand, by those who are confederate both in
spirit & practice, with the *Scarlet Whore*, *sitting upon the Scarlet-coloured*
Beast, and drunken with the Blood of the Saints (a). (a description which (a) Rev. 17.
36.
belgeth not the Prelatical Primhood, or Ministry) must needs have
a direct and strong tendency to their real lhbis and detriment, may be
thus brought out of darkness into light. The great jealousie and fierce
wrath of God are again and again revealed from Heaven, not only
against the Antichristian *Beast* himself, that had *two Horns like a Lamb,*
yet Spake as a Dragon (b). (b) Rev. 13. 11.
But also against all his complices and
followers, against all his Worshipers, and those that should communi-
cate with him in his sins [that is, in any of those sins which are more
appropriately his, his, as he claims to be Vicar General unto Christ,
and to umpire matters of Christian Religion and Divine Worship, as
he pleaseth, and by what Penalties, as well Civil, as Ecclesiastick, he
pleaseth] *And the third Angel followed them, saying, with a loud voice,*
If any man worship the Beast and his Image, and receive his mark in his
forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of
God; which is poured out without mixture [that is, without any alloy
of mercy or compassion] into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be
tormented with Fire and Brimstone, in the presence of the holy Angels, and
in the presence of the Lamb: And the smoke of their torment ascendeth
up for ever: And they have no rest day nor night who worship the Beast and
his Image, and who receive the mark of his name (c). (c) Rev. 14. 9.
A most
dreadful denunciation and warning: enough to make both the ears of
him that shall hear it, to tingle; and to prevail with any man that
loves not the vengeance of hell fire, or to have God his Enemy in the
fiercest of his Indignation, to keep off, at least, *the thousand five*
hundred furlongs distance, spoken of (Rev. 14. 20.) from all com-
munion with the *Beast*, *Babylon*, the *False Prophet*, and *Scarlet Whore*,
in all their lewd and detestable doings. And whereas several other
things of moment might be observed from the passages now cited,
I shall (at present) take notice of these two only. First, That the
most severe and dreadful vengeance here described, is not threatened
against any inward defection, or leaning in heart, mind or judgement,
towards the wayes and practices of the *Beast*, but against any outward
compliance with him, as in the receiving his mark in the forehead, or

in the right hand, &c. So that it is in vain for men to plead the integrity and goodness of their heart, if in their outward man they conform to any of his abominations. *Secondly*, That the Holy Ghost expresseth those compliances, or those acts of compliance, with the Beast, against which the most heavy doom described, is threatened, in words and phrases that are obscure, and of difficult interpretation (as the worshipping of the Beast and his Image, the receiving his Mark in the Forehead, or in the right Hand.) that so the Saints might be made jealous and fearful, not only of such actions and ways wherein they should broadly and right-down symbolize, and comport with him, but even of those also, which have the least and lightest appearance of such a comportment. Men use to be more circumspect in their way, and more careful of keeping themselves at a sufficient distance from Ditches, Precipices, and places of danger, when they walk in the twilight; the light of the Sun is apt to make them more bold and venturesome. And it is the express will of God concerning us, that we

- a) 1 Thess. 5: 22. abstain, not only from that which is really and unquestionably evil, but from all appearance of evil. (a) likewise; yea, and from whatsoever is of an inviting, tempting, and alluring nature unto evil (b) & yea, and from whatsoever we are not reasonably, and well assured in our Judgements and Consciences, that it is not evil. (c). Now that our ordinary and frequent attendance upon persons commissioned and sent by *Prelates* to preach, is a countenancing of, and consequently, a communicating with, as well the one, as the other, in their sins (with the Prelates in their blasphemous usurpations and inroachments upon the high Prerogative of *Christ*; with the Preachers; in their consenting unto their Masters in those sacrilegious impieties, by dividing the spoils with them, and accepting a Ministerial Dignity from and under them) hath been demonstratively proved formerly (d). And the sin of Prelates in claiming and exercising such a power in, and over the Churches of *Christ*, which is competent only unto *Christ* himself, and accordingly appropriated unto him by God, being (for kind) one of the most notorious and stigmatical sins of the *Babylonish* or *Antichristian* Beast; they who justify, or any wayes communicate with the Prelates in the sin, justify the *Beast* also, and communicate with him in the same, and consequently, bring themselves under the dint of those most terrible threatnings from Heaven, which are bent against him, and all that bid him *God speed* in the way of his *Antichristian* Abominations (as we lately heard) neither are they who quarrel with him, or declare themselves with the greatest zeal and passion against him, about other matters wherein themselves are, or (probably) may be

d) See Confutation 2. and

be some way concerned, hereby either made, or declared innocent from the great offence of complying with him, and justifying him. For thieves may kill our, and draw swords upon one another about dividing the prey, and yet justify one the other in following the same wicked course of thieving: and *Sampson's Foxes* were tyed together by their tails, when their heads looked contrary ways. In like manner, men may preach and write with a keen stile, yea, and make most severe Laws against him, that calleth himself *Christ's Vicar* [that is, *Antichrist* (a)] and against those that profess a religious subjection unto him (whom we call *Papists*) and yet may symbolize, and be in the same condemnation with him, if they claim or exercise, yea, or maintain and justify that kind of power which he claims (though over greater numbers of men) and exerciseth, but in much a larger Sphere than they; a power (I mean) of imposing upon men what they please in matters of Religion, or of Faith and Worship, under what penalties they please also. The claim of this power over the *Christian World*, (or, I might say, over the *whole World*) constitutes him that maketh the claim, whoever he be, that Notorious and Grand *Anti-christ*, or *Vice-Christ*, of whose coming into the World in his season, the *Christians* in the dayes of the Apostles *Paul* and *John*, had heard, (b) and whose History (his rise, progress, exploits, continuance, together with his most doleful and dreadful *Catastrophe*, or end) is prophetically set forth by these Apostles: by the former more briefly, *2 Thess. 2.* by the latter, more largely in the Book of the *Revelation*. And whosoever they be that claim the like power, though it be over a smaller part of men, and over those only, who live under their Civil Government and Power, (as most Rulers and Governours that are called *Christian*, do) they justify that very power in the nature or kind of it, the claim and exercise of which is the very life and soul, and quickning spirit of *Antichrist* emphatically, and *καὶ ἐξουσίαν*, to called: and consequently, in this respect, may (with too good propriety of speech) be termed *Anti-christian*, or *Antichrists* of an inferiour order. But this by the way. From the late premises it plainly enough appeareth, that the lending of our ears and understandings, from time to time, to a Ministry of a spurious and earthly descent, and which the Prelates (rank of the spirit that breatheth in *Antichrist* the Great) may

this sense frequently used in the New Testament, *Math. 2. 22. Luke 11. 11. Jam. 4. 14.* Nor is it (I verily believe) here so much as once used in an adverbative sense: Yea, in confirmation it is used in the like signification, *Acts 18. 2.* and elsewhere. (b) *2 Thess. 2. 5, 6. 1 John 4. 3.*

(a) The word *Antichrist* signifies as well *Christ's* Substitution, Deputy, Vicar, or one that acteth in his place or stead, as one that is an Adversary or Enemy to him: although it be true, that he that acteth in his stead, exercising such a power, which is appropriately his, & vested in him only, is his grand Adversary and must needs be so, as might be shewed at large. The proposition is, as our best Lexicons inform us, most properly signifies *pro, vice, loco, for, instead, or place* [of another] and is in

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truly call theirs, is a constructive justification of this *Amichrist*, and that in his fundamental wickedness (as was even now hinted) and so exposeth us unto danger of partaking with him in his plagues: and therefore cannot be encouraged; or led unto it by the sweet *Gum* of the liberty purchased for us by Christ; this (as hath been shewed) most effectually dissuading and drawing us aside from all actions and wayes, that are of any threatening or dangerous consequence unto us.

Secondly, Whereas the *Argument* pleadeth that the benefit of Edification may lawfully be sought after, and received, from any Ministry whatsoever, not only in the Reformed Churches, but even among *Papists* themselves, as from *Jesuites*, *Fryars*, &c. I answer;

1. That evil ought not to be done, for the compassing or obtaining of any good whatsoever. The great Apostle being reported to affirm the contrary, rejects the report with great indignation, as an unworthy slander, *Rom. 3. 8.* And no marvel; it being repugnant even to the Light of Nature (as might be shewed from the Sayings of some of her Prophets) that the attainment of that which is good, should be endeavoured by unlawful wayes: The reason whereof might be insisted on, but that we are in haste. Now it hath been formerly argued, and proved, by *Considerations* not a few, That to attend upon any Ministry, which is of an Apocryphal and sinful erection, and consequently derogatory unto *Christ*, and his care and faithfulness over the House of God, whatsoever our ends or expectations may be, in, or from such our attendance, is unlawful, and displeasing unto God; and more especially, and unquestionably, in the case of Scandal given to weak Christians. No goodness of ends or intentions, will make atonement for a sinful action.

2. Though Edification be more necessary, and of greater concernment to be endeavoured and sought after by a *Christian*, than his daily bread, yet God having provided orderly and regular means, and these every way sufficient for his obtaining it, (as hath been with greatest evidence proved from the Scriptures*) he is not to please himself with breaking the Divine appointment on this behalf, or to be his own Carver, when God hath set out a meet and full allowance for him; no whit more, than with seeking his daily bread by indirect and unwarrantable practices, when as there are honest wayes and means to supply him in this kind, which have the blessing of God annexed by promise unto them, and he well capable of the use of them. The holy Ghost chargeth it upon the Saints as a special duty and service for the

* See *Consideration* 19.

the honour of *Christ*, that they observed a *Decorum*, and comely Order in their Church Assemblies, and in managing the Ordinances and holy Institutions of God. *Let all things be done decently, and in order.* (b). And the Apostle *Paul* signifies to the *Colossians* that he rejoiced, beholding, though onely in spirit, (for he was now absent in body) their Order (c). And *Titus* was left by him in *Crete* to put things in order, or (as the word signifieth) to set matters at rights, in the Churches there (d). Now as it is a manifest breach of order, when a wife is disobedient to her own husband, her obedience unto him being so and comely (as the Holy Ghost himself hath adjudged it, *Coloss.* 3. 18.) So is it no less disorderly for any person, who hath freely embodied himself in a Church of *Christ*, the members whereof ought to submit themselves one to another in the fear of the Lord (*Ephes.* 5. 21. *1 Pet.* 5. 5.) And again, to serve one another in love, *Gal.* 5. 13. To build up themselves in their most holy Faith, *Jude* vers. 20. To obey those that are over them in the Lord, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work sake, *1 Thes.* 5. 12, 13. *Heb.* 13. 17. Not to forsake the assembling of themselves together, but to exhort one another, *Heb.* 10. 25. Not to make rents or Divisions in their body, *1 Cor.* 1. 10. or to cause offences, *Rom.* 16. 17. (with several other things of like import with these) it is (I say) disorderly in the highest for any Member being under such sacred obligations as these, unto his body, or fellow-members, to turn his back upon them, to abandon their communion, to forsake their holy Assemblies, and under a pretence of *Christian* liberty to seek after edification, to betake himself from time to time unto strange Teachers (especially being of an infamous and polluted Order) and to frequent Congregations or a Politique Constitution, and worldly complexion, in the name of Churches of *Christ*. Now for any man to expect edification by violating the Order, which *Christ* hath established in his Churches, is with as little reason, as to expect to gather grapes of thorns, or figs of bistles.

(and lastly, for this) Were it granted, or supposed, that a person might gather as much, yea or more, knowledge in the Mysteries of the Gospel, from the lips of strange Teachers in their Ministry, than he was like to do by the teachings in his own Church, and amongst those, from whom he hath separated himself; yet neither will this prove that he *disserh*, as much, or more, as, or than, he might have done, by waiting upon God at the door of the lips of him, or them, who speak from God, in his own Congregation. The Silver, and Gold, which an ungodly man possesseth, may be of the same kind of metal, and of the

* Phil.
37. 16.

same alloy, and refining, with that, which is possessed by one that is righteous: yet the Prophet David saith, that a little that a righteous man hath, is better [that is, is serviceable to the owner upon a better account] than the riches of many wicked (27). The reason is, or may be, because the *righteous mans little*, being honestly gotten, or obtained, hath the blessing of God upon it, and is sanctified unto him: Whereas the riches of wicked men, being either unjustly obtained, or unconscionably detained and kept up, or both, are polluted unto the owners, and have the curse of God cleaving to them, according as he threatneth, Mal; 2. 2. *I will curse your blessings*. In like manner, the knowledge in things appertaining unto God, and relating unto the saving of the soul, which is obtained by breach of Gospel-order, and by attending upon a Ministry of an unclean Parentage and descent, may, in the letter and notion of it, be altogether the same (yea and possibly exceed it) with that, which is gained by keeping close to God in his Gospel-Institutions & Appointments, and received from those Teachers, which the Holy Ghost hath set over us, or is dispensed in our own *Christian Assemblies*; and yet come far short of it in the matter of true Edification [I mean, in building men up in Faith and issue holiness.] For there is an aptness in knowledge, in conjunction with the weakness and vanity of the heart of man, to *pass men up* (as the Apostle speaketh) which is as contrary to Edification, as contrary may be, unless the flatulency and windiness of it be corrected by the Grace and Blessing of God. Besides, the Scripture in many known places, informeth us, that knowledge and ungodliness agree too well together (many times) in the same subject and soul. Now though God may (as hath been argued, and granted, formerly) sometimes countenance and bless a Ministry of a foreign plantation, to the conversion of some, and edification of others [namely men, and whilst, the irregularity and unlawfulness of it remains undiscovered, so that people in the simplicity of their hearts resort unto it, and whilst other means of Grace are scant, and Gospel Churches few, and remote] yet there is little question to be made but that he much more rejoyleth over a Ministry of his own contrivance and establishment, to work gracious and great things by it for the precious souls of men. And Ministers, who receive their Commission for their work from him, or in his way, are oft found *Ministers of the Spirit*, when as those of an exotic and earthly promotion, though of greater gifts, and parts of learning, prove (in comparison) *Ministers onely of the Letter*. Therefore they that go wondring, or wandring, after such Teachers as these, upon a design or desire of *Christian edification*, expose themselves by a like course, unto
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a like curse or disappointment, with those Jews of old, concerning whom the Prophet said, *They shall commit adultery* [that is, they shall take unto them many wives] *and shall not increase* (a). And as it is recorded of Daniel and his three Companions, who refused to defile themselves with the portion of the Kings meat, or with the wine which he drank, chusing rather to eat pulse, and to drink water; that their countenances appeared fairer, and fatter in flesh, than all the children that did eat the portion of the Kings meat (b): In like manner they, who out of Conscience, shal content themselves with that spiritual diet, though it seems but spare and thin, which God judgeth meet to provide for them, are like to thrive better in the inner man, and to grow fatter in Grace, than those that lust after the delicate wits and parts, which are found in some of those Teachers, by whom the souls of the Princes, and Great men of the Earth delight to be served. So the Israelites in the wilderness, being dissatisfied with Manna (which yet was Angels bread (c)) withlifying it as a light bread (d), and complaining, that their soul was dried away for want of better nourishment (e), fell a lusting after flesh: wherewith though God was greatly provoked, yet they were not disappointed of their lust (f), flesh was given them in great abundance (g): But while the flesh was yet between their teeth, the wrath of the Lord was kindled against them, and the Lord smote them with an exceeding great plague (h). And it is greatly to be feared, that such Members of Christian Congregations, who kick against the spiritual provisions in those Houses of God, to which they relate, as if there were neither marrow, nor fatness, nor any good nourishment in them, and think to feast sumptuously with the World in their Synagogues, and Assemblies; greatly (I say) it is to be feared, that the sweet morsels they shall eat here, will never digest kindly with them, nor breed any good blood, but turn to wind and water, and bring the displeasure of God upon them. Therefore if Edification be the end which men propose unto themselves in taking a liberty to travel to drink of the waters of Abanah and Pharpar, they might wish much more wisdom, and likelihood of success, have consulted the obtaining of their desire in this kind, by staying at home, and contenting themselves with the streams of Jordan.

Argument VII.

Lastly, Some conceive they may lawfully hear those Ministers whom these Papers all along have endeavoured to perswade all good men to decline and turn away from, if they hear them onely as men

well furnished by God with gifts and abilities for the preaching of the Gospel, and shall not at all mind, or regard, their Ordination; neither whence it comes, nor whither it goes, nor by what, or whose, Authority they stand forth to preach. For that it is lawful to hear any man preach the Gospel, even without any Ordination by men at all, if we perceive, or understand, him competently qualified for the work, is more generally, if not universally, acknowledged by knowing and understanding men.

Answer.

1. There is little question to be made but that it may be lawful to hear, yea oft, and from time to time, to hear such a man preach, or declare in words, and in a continued discourse (for this I call preaching) the counsel and mind of God in the Gospel, who never received Ordination (in the common, and best known Notion of the word) from men; yet under these Conditions, or Provide's.

1. That he pretends not to an Ordination, having never received any, true, or false, and the falshood of his pretence, or his lye in this case, is either known to us, or justly suspected. It is not worthy a *Christian*, to countenance a liar, or a person justly suspected for such, in so sacred a work, as the dispensing the Oracles of God.

2. That he hath not submitted to any Mock Ordination, or such which is irregular (in the principal, or main of it) for such an Ordination is a meer nullity (as was shewed soon after the beginning of this Discourse) in which respect, he that walketh under it, may well be taken for a Non-Ordained man. Yet such a man is not to be countenanced, or honoured, with the presence of a *Christian*, when he presumes (not having first, by one means or other, testified his Repentance for such a miscarriage) to minister the Glorious Gospel of *Christ*. For it is not meet that the sheep of *Christ* should give ear to such a Shepherd, who *entreats not by the door* (that is, by *Christ*, and according to his appointment) *into the Sheep-fold, but climbeth up another way*, Joh. 10. 1, 5. compared. But this is the main part argued hitherto.

3. That we find him to be, in some degree at least, *Assuor*, enabled by God to teach: which requireth, 1. Some good acquaintance in the Master Veins of the body of the Gospel: And 2. A convenient

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utterance, so as to be able to communicate the conceptions of his mind, unto the minds and understandings of those that hear him. To encourage any private Christian to the exercise of Prophecyng, in any more publick way than amongst those of his own family, whom God hath not recommended unto his Brethren, by the common Donation of both these Gifts unto him, especially the former, in some considerable proportion above the generality of his fellows, renderth rather to the dishonour of the Gospel, and to the disparagement of him that is encouraged upon such terms, than otherwise.

4. That he be a person of a modest, humble, sober, and grave spirit, of an inoffensive and exemplary behaviour, not under any observation or reproach for any thing scandalous or unchristian, in his course. If they shall undertake to preach *Christ*, who are enemies unto him, (as all those are who obey not his Gospel, or will not suffer him to reign over them, *Luke 19. 27.*) they are not to be honoured or encouraged in such their undertaking, by those who are his friends.

5. (and Lastly) That whilst we honour a private Christian in his exercise of those good Gifts, which God hath given him for our Edification and Comfort, we do not prejudice (in the least) that greater and more solemn Ordinance of the Ministry, which *Christ* hath given as a singular blessing unto his Churches; nor any wayes discourage or grieve those, who are over us in the Lord, and must give an account for our souls. The Ordinances of *Christ* are all necessary in their (respective) seasons, and amicably affected towards one another: there is employment enough, and this honourable, for them all; so that one needs not endamage or entrench upon the priviledges of another. These Cautions and Conditions observed, there is little question but that it is very lawfull to attend upon the Gospel-exercises of a private person, or a man not ordained (in the common sense of the word) for the Work of the Ministry, or of Preaching: Yet this proveth not (as was even now briefly shewed) that it is in like manner lawfull to hear the preachings of a person, who hath so far neglected the honour and pleasure of his great Lord and Master *CHRIST*, as to purchase leave and liberty, to preach the Gospel, of those who have neither power to grant, nor power to deny, and last of all, power to sell, any such thing, but are intruders upon, and usurpers, yea, and profaners of the holy Priviledges both of *Christ* and his People.

2. If it be unlawful to hear such Ministers as these, as, or because they are Prelatically Ordained, it cannot be lawful to hear them as gifted men, or as persons well qualified, in respect of knowledge and utterance, to preach the Gospel. For it is a general and true Rule, That no particular or individual action, which is unlawful in respect of any one circumstance, can be made lawful by the innocency of never so many circumstances otherwise. Nor is there any particular action so broadly unlawful, but hath some circumstance (haply, many) lawful enough relating to it, according to the saying, *Malum semper habitat in alieno fundo*, Evil alwayes dwells in a soyl that is none of its own; meaning, that it still cleaveth unto somewhat that is (naturally) good.

3. (And lastly,) In case he that thinketh it lawful to hear the Ministers we speak of, as men well accomplished with Gifts for the work of Preaching, though not as men sinfully ordained, should openly and publickly declare and profess, that he heareth them only in the former consideration, and at no hand in the latter, his act in hearing them (I conceive) would be much more excusable, both with God and good men; but whether it would be wholly justified hereby, I somewhat doubt. If a man should bow down to, or before an Image, although he should never so seriously protest and say, that he boweth not down to it, or before it, as it is silver, gold, wood, stone, or the like, nor as it is the workmanship of mens hands, but only as it putteth him in mind of God; I believe this would not make him innocent of the great offence of violating the second Commandment, where bowing down to an Image is expressly forbidden: for no consideration put by man upon such an action, which is a direct breach of any Commandment of God, can alter the property of it, or cause it to be no such breach. Therefore if it be against the mind of God, that we should with our presence honour the Teachings of such Ministers, who come in this Name unto us, from under *Prelatical* hands, it is not our considering them as persons gifted for the Ministry, when we do thus honour them, that will reconcile our acting in this kind with the mind, or will of God; how much less, if we shall keep this our consideration to our selves, and within our own breasts? For in this case, how shall our weak brother, who is offended at our hearing such Ministers, come to know, but that we hear them upon the worst, and most offensive terms of all, namely, as Preaching by vertue of their Episcopal Ordination, and so be offended much more? Again, How shall the

the Ministers themselves whom we hear, not think but that we hear them as Ministers of *Christ*, rightly Ordained, and so be strengthened or hardened In the evil of their way, upon a supposal of our concurrence in Judgement with them, touching their Ordination, and the goodness of the Way by which they have entered into the Ministry, if we hear them from time to time, without declaring or protesting against their Ordination? So that whoever they be, that judge it unlawful to hear them as *Prelatical Ministers*, have no reasonable ground to think that they may notwithstanding lawfully hear them as *gifted men*, unless they shall make their tongues the Interpreters of their minds and intentions in the case. Neither dare I warrant them that the loudest declaring of themselves in this kind, will warrant their practice in hearing them: But I really believe, that they will find it much cheaper of the two, and every way more commodious for them, wholly to wave the hearing of the men they wor of, than to make any such Declaration.

F I N I S.
